Death Before Dying

September 7, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

From September the 4th to the 10th of 2011 around the country, it's National Suicide Prevention Week. It's not a glamorous topic to write about but we have to recognize the impact it has for individuals, especially those who are LGBT youth as well as adults.

My own brush with suicide was in my early twenties. I was at a place where I felt rejected by everyone, my family, friends and in a way myself. At the time it felt I was living someone else life as I was struggling with not only my sexual identity but also the fact that I had this thing in me called HIV.

It was a suffering in silence as I dared not share my secret with anyone for fear of rejection as well as condemnation.

I can still remember when I made my attempt. It was after a time when I was crying for help without crying for help, if that makes any sense. I wanted people to ask how I was doing but everyone seemed to be to busy with their own lives. So I reached out to people hoping that they could read my mind and know I had these thoughts of taking myself out of the game, but unfortunately whatever signals I was putting out was being missed.

So there I was alone in my small apartment, sitting at a small table with a phone and a bottle of Tylenol. The phone was in case someone's spider sense kicked in and they knew what I was about to do. I would even occasionally pick up the phone to make sure it was working, and it was. The dial tone made it seemed no one cared.

I opened the Tylenol bottle and stared at the full bottle and each one went from my hand to my mouth. Eventually before I knew it the bottle was half empty, just like my life. I already felt that I was dead before the actual act of dying.

Thankfully I got the nerve to pick up that phone one last time and make one last attempt to reach out and this time instead of playing the guessing game I let the person know what I did. They reacted right away and got me help. I made it.

Yet there are many who don't make it. especially when looking at LGBT youth. According to National American Association of Suicidology they report that gay high school students and those unsure of their sexuality were 3.4 times more likely to have attempted suicide in the last year as compared to their peers. It's hard to get an accurate number of how many attempts are successful as sexual orientation and gender are not often on death certificates.

For African Americans suicide is the third leading cause of death among African-American youth, ages 10-19. In other words suicide is not something that only white people do.

Although it's a depressing topic, I feel this week is important as it wakes us up to the reality of suicide as a choice. I know for myself, it would have made such a big difference if someone had reached out to me instead of me reaching out to them. Yet now there are resources where you can call and no matter what your sexual identity or issue, someone is available to speak to you by phone without judgement.

Because of the stigma and identity issues LGBT encounter, if you're a friend, whether gay or straight, we should take a few minutes out of our lives and check on our friends and family. There's a value in reaching out and just letting them know that whatever they may be going through, they're not alone and you're there for them. Or you know someone you can connect them with to talk before they act.

The one thing we can't do is turn back the hands of time. Something I wish I could have done when a friend last November took his life because he couldn't handle being gay. Knowing I spoke to him two days before he did it. I wish I knew what to look for.

To get more information on suicide and what to look for in others who may be contemplating it go to The National Suicide Prevention Week website. There's also resources for those who may be thinking they have no other options.

Know that although life is not what you want it to be and you may feel you're stuck in a corner remember that sometimes to get to the sun we have to make it through the clouds. We all need that support and through that support we can remove thoughts of dying with images of life.

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