

Understanding Suicide and its Prevention – Equivocal Death Investigations



The New Year is quickly approaching, and let us all hope for a better year. Even if your year was great, it doesn't hurt to strive for better. Life can be extremely hard on us, and some have a more difficult time coping than others.

Although the Christmas/Holiday season is a joyous time, people still have a hard time coping with the let down, the bills, the broken relationships and even the beginning of a New Year. While some people look to the future on a positive note, others see only dread and feel overwhelmed with the sense of "here we go again".

Many people know how burdensome life can be; many have struggled with depression and the feelings of despair. While most people are able to seek the help they need, others feel the help just isn't there, and nobody would understand them anyway.

Our agency has been conducting equivocal death investigations since 2002, and in this time frame we have seen more suicide deaths than any other deaths. We have compiled the information contained in this article to assist in educating people on some of the aspects surrounding suicide deaths.

Suicide has no boundaries and it does not matter what age, race, ethnicity, sex gender, sexual orientation, career status, monetary status or where you live; it can strike at any given moment. Those who believe suicide affects only certain types of people have been living with their heads buried in a fantasy of beliefs, not reality.

We have seen time and time again similarities between suicides even though the mechanism used may be different. The list of questions goes beyond what is listed here, however a few of the repeated statements we have seen are as follows:

1. *They didn't leave a note, so they couldn't have committed suicide.* The consistency is that a suicide note is rarely left behind. Sometimes even when a note is left behind, the questions are still unanswered.
2. *They never mentioned suicide, so they couldn't have committed suicide. Or they did mention suicide and we talked it through.* The consistency is some people will never mention it, while others will mention it here and there and still others talk about it what may seem like too much to be taken seriously.

3. *They were so happy; it was one of the best days so they couldn't have committed suicide.* The consistency is that perhaps once the person has made this final decision, they no longer feel the depression, they feel relieved, and they are literally happy because they are not struggling with inner turmoil any longer.

4. *They couldn't have committed suicide there was a new baby in the family.* The consistency is that although a person may love that new family member, it brings on added stress from many aspects, maybe they were not ready for this new baby and everything might be too overwhelming for that person.

5. *They couldn't have committed suicide they just got a new job.* The consistency is getting a new job in the scheme of overwhelming life issues is not that important. Perhaps they felt pressured to take this job, when that job was not one they were truly interested in.

6. *They couldn't have committed suicide they just started a new relationship with a great person.* The consistency is although they have begun a new relationship; they may still be feeling the effects of a past relationship and cannot cope no matter who walks into their life.

7. *They couldn't have committed suicide they just bought a new car or new furniture, or some new gadget of some sort.* The consistency is, perhaps they bought the new item in hopes of cheering themselves up, when it just became another costly burden.

8. *They couldn't have committed suicide they had no drugs or alcohol in their system.* The consistency is perhaps they wanted to make a decision being free from any effects of drugs or alcohol, but not everyone is under the influence when they have committed suicide.

9. *They couldn't have committed suicide they just received a clean bill of health from their doctor.* The consistency is, although the doctor gave the person a stamped physical healthy card, the doctor cannot know if the person is suffering from any sort of mental disparity unless the patient tells them. Being healthy does not stop someone from committing suicide.

10. *They couldn't have committed suicide they had all kinds of money and had no reason to commit suicide.* The consistency is, it does not matter how much money a person does or does not have, and it is the struggles and stressors that come with having money or a lack thereof. It seems to ring true that "money can't buy happiness".

Those are just a few of what we have seen in our equivocal death investigations, this list could go on and on. Some of the resources listed below may have similar or different misconceptions, which only demonstrates just how broad the spectrum is and how there are no definite answers to this problem.

No matter what, it all boils down to an individual and every single one of us are different and every single one of us have our own unique brains and thought processes. We cannot, no matter how hard we try or how much we desire get into another person's brain to try and change their thoughts.

We can however, be there and let them vent to us, but we need to do this with patience and sincerity. Contrary to what people might believe, a person can detect whether you are truly listening to them, or whether you are just sitting there pretending. So make it a point to truly listen to people, you never know how important just “listening” might be to another human being. If someone you know ever mentions anything surrounding suicidal thoughts, talk to them about it, offer them some resource options, and perhaps even offer to go with them to their physician. Ignoring the situation will not make it go away, and these days there is no subject that is considered “taboo”.

If you or someone you know has been affected by someone committing suicide, whatever you do, do not play the blame game on the living, whether it be on yourself or someone else. The devastation left behind after someone commits suicide is horrific enough without adding unnecessary fault finding. Unfortunately the responsibility lies upon the shoulders of the person who chose to take their own life and what ifs and whys will not change that final act. We have to find peace within ourselves, and that can sometimes take years as with any death.

Here are some suggested resources that may be helpful:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-8255

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

<http://www.afsp.org/>

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml>

http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/

<http://www.save.org/>

Our hope is to reach out and help curtail in some way this world-wide problem of suicide. If you or someone you know could benefit from this information we ask that you please pass it on, you might just save a life.

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