

Loss of a Friend

One of my close friends committed suicide and I am having trouble dealing with it and could use a few suggestions. Can you please help me? I sometimes miss her a lot and feel like it's my fault. I know its not, but there were some things that she was struggling with and I told my parents, who ended up trying to help her. But then she ended her life and I feel really bad about it.

It is such a tragedy when people feel that death is more appealing than life. Every person is incredibly special and unique, and losing a friend or family member, especially when we believe it was too soon for them to go, is many times tough to deal with.

It is not unusual for those who are close to someone who committed suicide to feel like they could have done something to prevent it. It's a natural reaction to hearing such news. People wonder if they missed the signs, second guess their actions, and question whether they should have taken just a little more time to visit the last time they saw them. But your friend's suicide is not your fault. It sounds like you know that in your head, but you're having a hard time letting it sink into your heart. This will take some time. Your friend was obviously going through some tough times and was making some damaging choices. But that's the important thing to note here... suicide was her choice, and hers alone. It's the saddest choice any one could ever make. You can be assured that there was much more going on in your friend's life in addition to what she shared with you, and there may have also been some emotional illness contributing to this tragedy. I can almost guarantee that your friend had suicidal thoughts long before you and your parents tried to help. Very often, the person who is suicidal is very secretive and hides what's really going on. They keep trying to deal with the pain in their life on their own, and in the end, it overwhelms them. Life is not meant to be lived alone. We need to reach out to others who are hurting. In the same way, when we're hurting, we also need to reach out to others to help us through a tough time.

When people are having problems or going through tough times it's helpful to encourage them to talk to somebody. I believe you spoke with your parents because you were concerned for your friend. Telling a trusted adult, in this case your parents, is a good idea when we are confused about what we should do or when we think things are out of our hands. Your concern for your friend is commendable and you should never feel guilty about wanting to help a friend. Sadly, your friend once again refused help and thought she could handle it alone.

Dealing with your friend's loss will be very difficult. Please talk to a counselor, pastor or a youth pastor. They are experienced in helping people through tough times. It will help you through the grieving process to keep on talking about your feelings with friends and family too. We were created with emotions and feelings and keeping them bottled up is not a healthy thing to do. There are books that deal with the grief caused by a suicide and many websites that address the topic as well. Some communities and churches even have support groups.

I want you to know that suicide and suicidal thoughts are a major problem in our society. About one out of four people know someone who has committed suicide. Some statistics show that 1,800 youth attempt suicide each day in America alone. That is a staggering thought, and only emphasizes even more the importance of encouraging others to be more open about their struggles. Hang in there, and keep making the right choice to live your life to the fullest.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

Life Promotions • Appleton, WI • www.lifepromotions.com • 800-955-5433

