

Reaching Out for Help after My Friend's Suicide

I thought I could overcome my depression on my own, but finally asking for help changed everything.

By Brixton Gardner

While working one day a few summers ago, I got the news that a good friend of mine passed away from suicide. I was shocked—I honestly didn't know how to react. I remember sitting at my desk in silence, unable to think or do anything.

All sorts of thoughts and emotions came flooding in, leaving me confused. But I kept telling myself that I was OK and that I would get over it. The following months, however, brought an overwhelming wave of depression and sadness over me. There were many tears and sleepless nights. Some mornings, I couldn't even get out of bed. I didn't think my prayers were being answered or heard. Reading the scriptures felt flat and uninspiring. I felt hopeless and didn't think things would get better.

For the longest time, I was afraid to talk to anyone about what I was feeling. People knew about my loss and would offer to talk or give support, but I always turned them down. "I don't want to bother them," I would think. "Besides, they have their own problems to worry about. Why would they care about mine?"

There was one Sunday where my grief seemed too much to bear. I couldn't sit still during sacrament meeting. When the meeting finally finished, I bolted into the hallway to get out of the building. Just before I made it to the door, I ran into a woman in my ward who had lost a son to suicide years earlier. When we made eye contact, the Spirit told me it was time to say something about what I was feeling.

It was scary, but with a shaky voice I stopped her and asked, “Can I talk to you for a bit? I need help.”

She listened to me explain what had happened and how I was feeling. Then, without hesitation, she held my arm and looked at me with tears in her eyes. “I just want you to know that this is not your fault and that you are so loved,” she said.

We both couldn’t help but cry as we kept talking. For me, it felt like the clouds were parting. There was finally some sort of a light shining through on my life. Everything she said to me in the hallway that day was an answer to my prayers.

What I learned most from that moment was

that sharing my feelings had finally allowed me to start healing. For some reason, I had convinced myself that I could face everything alone and that I didn’t need any help. Though I couldn’t see it, I was surrounded by people who loved me and wanted to help me.

I’ve learned that when we say that we are to be “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18), it means that your heartaches are my heartaches and my pains are also your pains. It means not only giving help when needed but also being willing to receive help when we need it as well. Simply letting others help me is what made the difference and ultimately what led me to make a full mental recovery.

Now, a few years after this experience, I can honestly say that I am the happiest I have ever been in my life. With a lot of hard work, and ultimately by the grace of God, I have become someone stronger than I was before all this happened. Prayer, service, vulnerability, humility, therapy, countless blessings, and so much more have helped me get to where I am today. I owe a lot to Heavenly Father, my family, and my close friends for helping me through all this. How grateful I am that I reached out for help—it was a key to healing. ■



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