



Idaho Youth Speak

Idaho Youth Commission

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(All of the images in this newsletter are sourced from Creative Commons except where noted.)

Don't Jump: The Pressure of Peer Pressure

By Erica Daw

"If your friends jumped off of a bridge, would you follow?" These were the exact words I heard come from my mother's mouth time and time again. The truth was, of course I wouldn't jump off of a bridge if my friends did. Bridges are high in the air and scary, and I don't do heights. Besides all that climbing to get to the top of the bridge



is just too much work! Okay, I know this isn't what she meant. Not at all.

My mother was giving an anecdote about peer pressure. Truth be told, the

thought of me as an adolescent being enticed by peer pressure incited fear and panic in my mother's head. Unbeknownst to me at the time, she worried that I would be influenced by my peers to make a choice that she did not agree with AND come to find out- she had been there to know that it isn't always an easy thing to make the right choice! However, maybe what SHE didn't (Continued page 4)

My Unhealthy Journey to a Happy Healthy Me

By Jenn Hood

!!WARNING!! This article contains graphic material!!

Let's talk about healthy relationships. What does a healthy relationship look like? How does a healthy relationship make you feel? When asking these questions, think about the past relationships you have had and those you have seen.

Before we talk about the answers to these questions, let's talk about unhealthy and abusive

(Continued page 3)

Transitions

By Amiee Stevens

When you think of turning 18, what do you think of? Well, when I was turning 18, I thought about finally being an adult, being able to get ready for college after I graduated high school and being held responsible for when, where, and what time I got to take my college courses. I was so excit-



ed. However, what is taught in high school doesn't really help prepare you for the expectations of adulthood.

What you'll need to know:

- You are responsible for your own actions.
- What you do really has consequences when you're an adult.
- You'll need to understand the expectations at your college or full-time job.

(Continued page 4)

I see... I feel... I believe

By Roxanna Lizarraga



(Vedran, 2014)

Suicide:

It's Time to Get Help

By Lisa Byce

Many people struggle with thoughts of killing themselves; you are not alone. But it is important to understand that these feelings are not permanent, and you can enjoy your life again. With help, you can learn that you have options, you can learn to cope with hopeless

feelings, and you can make a plan to stay safe^.

The Reasons for Feeling Suicidal

There can be many reasons why you may want to kill yourself. You may have a mental health concern like depression or bipolar disorder. You may have gone through a painful life change, or

I can see everyone down below

I see smiles and tears

I have to go

I must follow my dreams

I must have hope

I must have faith

I believe I can find my happiness

I believe I can follow my dreams

I'm not just a balloon

I'm something real

I'm an innocent soul who has to find a path

That will lead to my happiness

The sky's the limit.

you may feel like nobody likes you or understands you. Maybe it's not so much that you want to die, you may just want to stop feeling altogether. Yet these feelings can make it hard to think – they can make you confused and unable to see your options*.

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Journey, Cont.

!!WARNING!! This article contains graphic material!!

relationships.

My unhealthy relationships started when I was young. I was raised by both of my parents who were married until my mother passed away in August of 2017. My parents, especially my father, were loving, but my mother suffered from an undiagnosed mental illness, which is now commonly known as bipolar disorder. She did not express emotion much unless it was anger or shutting down completely. My mother with her anger was the first unhealthy relationship I ever had. So, I preferred to spend most of my time with my dad in his garage building and fixing things.

As I got older, I began to act out in different ways seeking attention. I

began smoking and sneaking alcohol from my dad's liquor cabinet and even began using drugs. I experimented with anything and everything that could help me escape from the angry rage my mother always seemed to have. It wasn't too long afterward, I became sexually active. In a lot of ways, sex was another drug to me. This led me to another whole set of unhealthy relationships. When I was 15, I was raped by my older sister's ex-boyfriend. I became pregnant from that rape. I gave birth to my oldest son when I was 16 years old.

When I was 17, I met a man who was 7 years older than me. I thought to myself, "Yes, this is the way out of my mother's trap," and I married him after knowing him only 5 months. That became my next unhealthy relationship. I didn't really know him at all. He turned out to

(Cont. page 5)



(MaxPixel, 2016)

"I experimented with anything and everything that could help me escape from the angry rage my mother always seemed to have."

MaxPixel. (2016). Free Photo Mood Thoughtful Sad Female Woman Mourning Sadness - Max Pixel. Retrieved from Maxpixel.net website: <https://www.maxpixel.net/Mood-Thoughtful-Sad-Female-Woman-Mourning-Sadness-3187671>

Transitions, Cont.

Something important to address that not all high schools emphasize is the opportunity of a trade school. What is a trade school? A trade school (also known as a technical school) is after high school education to train students for a specific job in a skilled trade career. Most importantly, a trade school offers hands-on training to prepare students for actual work in their chosen field. There are jobs like being an electrician, a mechanic, or a welder, among many more jobs. Trade schools are very important to the community and are definitely a



different option for those who aren't interested in going to college; it takes less schooling, and there can be more job opportunities when you finish at a trade school.

This checklist is important to keep in mind:

- Get a state-issued ID (if you don't already have one).
- Figure out transportation.

- Open a savings and checking account with a bank.
- Get registered to vote (which you can start doing at 18).
- Register for the Selective Service (a requirement at 18).

There are many other things, but those are all important. For more information, go to 18inidaho.org if you are ever unsure how to go about these tasks or if you are unsure where you stand as an 18-year-old in the community (like what your rights are as an adult or just laws in general). The website has so much good information that was not

addressed in this article but can help you as an adult. Turning 18 is really exciting, but it can also be intimidating. Don't be afraid to ask other adults for help, and utilize your resources, like the website provided. Most importantly, believe in yourself and know that you are capable of whatever you put your mind to!

Important website:

18inidaho.org

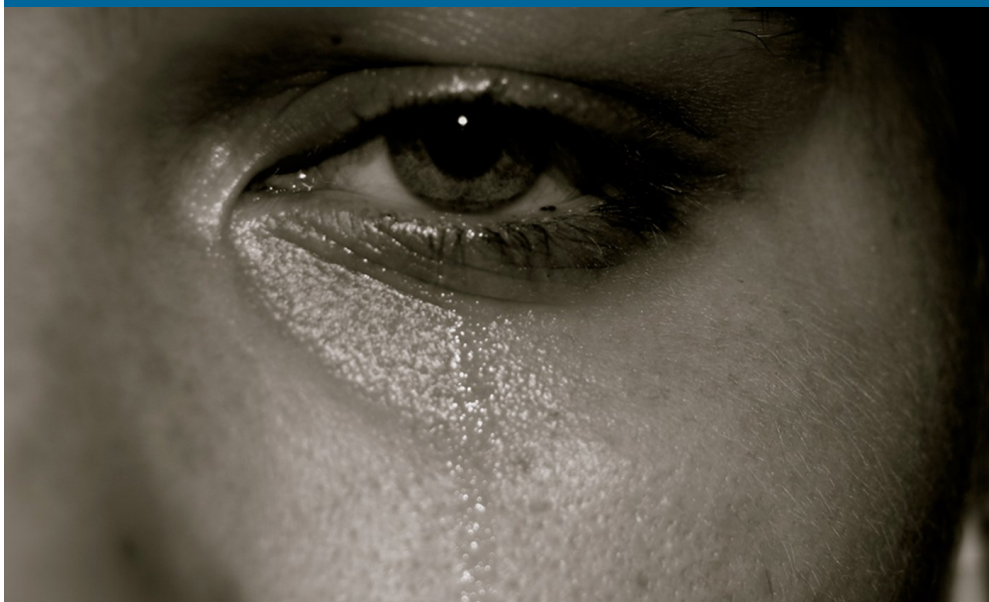
Don't Jump, Cont.

see is that from the time I was born, I had been constantly taking in the world around me and learning the role that cause and effect will play



in my life—and what I really wanted her to understand is...“I got this”. It is through this challenge of cause and effect that we ALL learn how to make decisions for ourselves, such as who we are and our belief system. In my own experience, I have found that it is sometimes very difficult and uncomfortable to stand out from the crowd and be the one that chooses a different path. Yet, we all know that this is a part of your journey to maturity and a sign of emotional development. When we respond to peer pressure, we are responding to a normal part of life and something that will always be a part of our life.

Don't get me wrong, I know that my mother used as much wisdom as she was equipped with because she cared about my future. She understood that the quest to make the correct choice – especially when influenced by my peers – can be confusing and daunting. She knew that I would be faced with decisions about my actions that would be influenced by peers daily. And not always did I make the right choice, even if the intention was well (Continued page 8)



Journey, Cont.

!!WARNING!! This article contains graphic material!!

be an alcoholic who was very controlling and someone who cheated on me repeatedly. We ended up having a son together because he refused to let me abort his child. So, I was 19 with 2 sons.

Fast forward past the many other negative relationships, to my second marriage. I met this man 3 months after I was released from my first prison sentence and on parole. My PO told me to stay away from him, but I did not listen. As a matter of fact, everyone told me he was bad news. This man was my ultimate unhealthy relationship. He was verbally abusive, saying on a regular basis that I was fat, a whore, lazy, no good, trashy or that no one wanted me, and I would never find anyone else. He moved me away from my family and isolated me and my children. I began to believe all of the things he kept saying to me until I was at my lowest point when I tried to commit suicide.

A few years of this passed and with low self-worth and low self-esteem, I agreed to marry him. I believed him; I would never be lovable to anyone else. He had already relapsed back into active addiction several years before and all along he was physically abusing me. Most of the time the abuse was because I was protecting my children from his abuse

(especially my oldest son). In April of 2009, he had been on a meth-fueled binge, he kidnapped me and held me hostage for what I believe was 3 days. During that time, he force-fed me psychotherapeutic medications prescribed to him, which caused me multiple periods of unconsciousness. He also got me addicted to meth again, even after knowing I had been clean from drugs for 8 years. During this time, I was beaten repeatedly, raped, nearly drown many times, forced to drive under the influence of prescription drugs and had many of my bones broken. Sadly, this caused my relapse back into active addiction and my return to prison. But this was my last unhealthy relationship!

I went through a program while in prison here in Idaho, called Moral Recognition Therapy. This program taught me what a healthy relationship was supposed to be like. The program also taught me how to have a healthy relationship with myself. Once I learned how to love myself for who I am, so many of the other pieces of my life fell into place. I knew what I didn't want in my relationships with other people, which helped me see what I did want in a whole new light. After learning all these things, I met a man who showed me what a healthy relationship is and what truly loving someone

**"I
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Pixabay. (2019, November 5). Free Image on Pixabay: Help, Emergency, Helping Hand, Save. Retrieved November 5, 2019, from pixabay.com website: <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/help-emergency-helping-hand-save-1300942/>

Vedran. (2014). Balloons Vector Drawing: Free SVG. Retrieved November 5, 2019, from freesvg.org website: <https://freesvg.org/balloons-vector-drawing>



Journey, Cont.

means. He helped me to see that I needed to help others going through the same things I did. This man encouraged me to go back to school as a way to better myself and to be able to share my story.

In going back to school, I have maintained a GPA of 3.50 or higher, remaining on the honor roll. I have been able to maintain at least one to two jobs during my entire educational period. I have worked my way up to supervisor of my department. Given that I was never able to hold down even one job or even graduate from high school, I am proud to say that I have changed so much in my life. I am now married to that wonderful man, who supports me in all my efforts. We are dedicated to working through whatever problems come our way in a calm and civil manner. Knowing my past experi-

ences, he is patient and kind, and he always helps me through my rough times. I have regained healthy loving relationships with my family members as well.

I have made it clear what my boundaries are, and everyone knows the consequences if they are violated. Most importantly, having the ability to know my own boundaries is amazing to me. I know who I am and what I want for myself. I know where I want to be and who I want to help, and I know how I am going to accomplish my goals.

To me, a healthy relationship is being able to communicate openly without yelling and fighting. It is loving another person with all my being but knowing when to draw the line before it becomes obsessive or controlling. It means compromising on

decisions and accepting the other person's point of view. It means the freedom to make my own choices. Today, for me, self-love is being comfortable in my own skin. It is accepting myself for who I am, knowing that I have made bad choices and mistakes and accepting that fact. Self-love is moving away from the past, into the present and striving to be a better me in the future. So, tell me, what does a healthy relationship look like to you? Do you know who you are or who you want to be? Do you want to help others who have been in your shoes? How will you accomplish your goals? What does self-love look like to you? I ask you these things because no one ever asked me. What changes can you make now, to be a better you in the future?

Suicide: It's time to get help, Cont.

Your First Step

There are people who want to help you, and they care about you. If you can talk to a parent, a teacher, a coach, or someone safe, tell them that you are thinking about harming yourself. If the first person you talk to does not help, talk to someone else⁺. You can also call the suicide hotline at 800-273-TALK (8255), text HELLO to 741741, or call 911^{*}. They will help you see that you have choices. There are solutions you may not have thought of and may not even know about. The main thing is to talk to someone right away and get help.

How You Can Stay Safe

After you reach out for help, it is important to make sure you keep from harming yourself.

- Surround yourself with people who will support you.
- Talk to encouraging people every day.
- Meet with people face to face and do fun, safe things together.
- Make a safety plan.
- Learn what triggers your suicidal thoughts.
- Discover what helps you to cope.
- Make a list of people that can help you when things get bad.
- Put the numbers of people who can help you on your phone. Include the number of your doctor or therapist, the hospital, the suicide hotline at 800-273-TALK (8255) and the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

- Make your environment safe. With your counselor, figure out what may be unsafe for you and limit your access to those things.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. They can make you feel worse⁺.

Remember, although everything may seem dark now, there is hope. The feelings you have can pass, and people want to help you. You are not alone.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-TALK (8255)

or

Text HELLO to 741741

Available 24/7



(Pixabay, 2019)

⁺Jaffe, J., Robinson, L., & Segal, J. (2019). Are You Feeling Suicidal? Retrieved October 8, 2019, from HelpGuide.org website: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/suicide-prevention/are-you-feeling-suicidal.htm>

[^]National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. (2019). Help Yourself. Retrieved September 30, 2019, from Suicidepreventionlifeline.org website: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/>

^{*}Nemours. (2017). About Teen Suicide (for Parents) - KidsHealth. Retrieved from Kidshealth.org website: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/suicide.html>

"There are people who want to help you, and they care about you"

"It takes nothing to fall into line, but it takes everything to stand alone."



Don't Jump, Cont.

thought out. In fact, I made the wrong choice many times. Sometimes that bridge didn't look as high as I had originally thought. Many times that bridge appeared as if it were covered with promises of something very enticing. There were also many times I assumed that risky behavior was expected of me because that was what I thought all of my friends would be interested in. As an adult, I found that this was highly untrue and that my peers that truly cared about me with sincerity, wanted to see the best for me and therefore did not want me to engage in risky situations that could affect my future goals and dreams.

But here's the real deal. How do we know if we have it right? How are we supposed to make the best decisions when confronted with peer pressure? The reality is that there is no absolute way to know. Yet, there are things that we can do to help us see if jumping off of that bridge could be

the right or wrong decision. Here are some tips from my own experience:

Check in — Ask a trusted friend or adult what they think about the choice you are confronted with. Consider their advice before the pressure to conform to others' thoughts on what you might do.

Surround yourself — Arm yourself with others that enjoy being individuals and resisting peer pressure.

Think about it — Use delay tactics to have the opportunity to look ahead and know if the decision you are making is in your own best interest.

Make a plan — Consider what types of pressure might affect you, and make a plan in advance of how you will deal with it.

Listen — If that little voice inside your head or your gut is telling you that the situation might not be of benefit to you, then honor that feeling! And remember, "It takes nothing to fall into line, but it takes everything to stand alone."

Local Juvenile Justice Councils Need You!

The Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission is a board of governor-appointed volunteers from each district working to represent the interests of Idaho concerning its youth. We, the Youth committee, are the heart and spirit of the Commission, made up of young adults who have experienced the situations that many Idaho youth currently encounter.

GET INVOLVED! LOCAL JUVENILE JUSTICE COUNCILS ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR YOUTH MEMBERS.

Becoming a member of your local

District Council is a great way to use your knowledge and experience to improve the Juvenile Justice System in Idaho. As a member of a district council, you'll have direct input on issues that matter to youth. With a little dedication, you could make a difference for youth in Idaho! Ready to make your voice heard? Visit www.ijc.idaho.gov to learn more about your local District Council!

Contact the Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission Youth Committee:

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