

I THOUGHT OF AN OLD FRIEND a few days back; no reason, but a barrage of thoughts entered my head. It seemed so real. Like warning bells. Something feels very surreal when you hear the news. An avoidable death, self inflicted, no warning whatsoever. What goes through the mind in those last desperate moments? Could it be the last few days, or is it cumulative months and years? *I can remember the days past of fun, friendship, laughter, so much to live for. Something happened, and I can't quite put the pieces together.*

Life has a way of wearing down the spirit, a heartbreak at a time, a disappointment here, job loss there. A relationship that pulls every breath of life out of you, or so it seems. We don't need one catastrophic event to pull our love for life down; on the contrary, it's much easier to slowly weave its way downward, one disillusionment at a time. It's like waking up one day after straying, over time, from your true beliefs and lifelong passions. *How did I get here? How did I get this far away from home? Where are the fences I depended on for so long, to keep me on the right path? Disillusionment: To lose naïve faith and trust. Desperation: loss of hope and surrender to despair; a state of hopelessness leading to rashness (Webster's)*

Death seems an easy option sometimes, an ending to a period of suffering that seems destined to go on forever. The anguish, however, doesn't end there. How many other victims are yet to surface following a suicide? The family must somehow cope with the loss, and questions that will always remain unanswered. A mother affects generations to come, for good or for bad. Fathers do as well, but a mother's love is so precious and heartfelt. The touch of a mom's love on her child passes to the next generation, through what is passed down. How can a child cope with the loss? Was it selfishness, or something deeply rooted that reached a culmination before anyone saw it approaching?

It takes little time to pull the trigger, slash the wrist, whatever the method of choice. Sadly, if we could somehow require every suicide victim to have a holding period of twenty four hours...time to think it over; look in to those kind, caring eyes of a loving parent, spouse, or child; talk to a friend who really cares, *if only they knew*; wait and find out his/her worst fears would not have really have come to pass...I wonder how many times it would not happen. Those that throw out hints are begging for help and attention; the ones that are full of despair leave no clues before or after, they only leave unreciprocated questions.

Somehow a romanticized view has emerged; *imagine the funeral, so beautiful with the flowers. The words, oh my, everyone misses me so, if things could have only been different. It will be okay. I'm free now, no more pain. I love you too.* What a tragedy, to believe such a notion. The grieving will be about getting beyond the anger. *How could he do this to his family? What will they do? I guess he didn't care about them at all. Why did she not care enough to be there when her girls receive their diplomas down the road? When they walk down the aisle on perhaps the biggest day of their lives, their wedding day?*

How could she not care? What an idiot, look at what he's done to his parents; they both loved him unconditionally. Why didn't he talk to someone? No one feels sorry for him.

Perhaps she did care, but let the perfect storm brew in her life, unattended. Life can reach a point where you see no way out, whether it's financial problems, a relationship, health issues, or a bevy of smaller things that lead up to a cataclysmic event.

Can't live without him, but after you're gone, he'll find someone else. *I'll never get out of this financial mess.* Others have, through time and discipline. *I'm just so tired. I wish it would all end...* Without faith and hope, any one can reach this place, and not have an answer. Those that choose to live life on the wheel of fortune, scattering the way of the wind, have nothing tangible to hold on to during their lowest point. Many of us have had fleeting thoughts in our periods of darkness that remain locked away in a secret chamber somewhere, deep within the recesses of our mind, inactive, yet unresolved. I have thought from time to time how much easier it would be to let a person enter my mind for a moment, to understand how I feel or think about them, to understand how I see the world, through my eyes. But I wonder if my friend would somehow steer into that hidden, locked chamber, seeing the inner parts that aren't to be revealed, ever. The fleeting thoughts that were subdued, the mistakes that we sometimes have trouble forgiving ourselves for. The little things that can add up to a big thing over time, if allowed to take root and grow.

Everyone needs that special place to go during their trials and periods of desolation. For some it's a place of prayer; sometimes it's a close friend that not only understands, but can finish those tough sentences that you are struggling with, reaching for words. Time is also a good healer, if we only allow it to come to pass. Have you ever looked at someone precious to you, maybe a child, parent, or good friend, and flashed back to a crossroad in your life? Think of what you would have missed if your decision had led you down a different path. My personal wish is that if someone I am within arm's reach of ever arrives at such a low place in his or her life, he or she will ask for my help, if I can make a difference. Reach out to someone. Life is too precious. The seasons of life come and go, and spring always follows our winter time. A time for planting and renewal and hope.

Do they all feel alone?



CRAIG ELLIOTT is the owner of EE Productions. He is a portrait and media photographer with corporate background in telecommunications. His passion is photography. Craig is currently working on his first book.

CONTACT: craig@eephotography.net

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