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Why We Matter

How Does the Concept of “We Matter” Relate To Suicide Prevention?

“We Matter” means everyone has a purpose and every life has value and significance. Suicide is rarely caused by one factor alone, but the combination of various risk factors ultimately leads to the victim feeling trapped- so trapped they believe their life has no value anymore (*Risk and Protective Factors / Suicide / CDC*, n.d.). Often the victim feels others around them would be better off if they were gone. But regardless of the trauma or cause of depression, the statement “We Matter” reaches everyone. It brings reassurance that their life indeed has value to someone.

What Does “I Matter, You Matter, We Matter” Mean to You

Even just reading this statement while preparing my essay brought an emotional response. I was diagnosed with depression last year and, soon after, I tried to take my own life. I remember making a list of everyone in my life and finding reasons for how they’d be better off without me. Some people treated me like this was true, but the list was a desperate attempt to justify what I knew was wrong. I had become infatuated with the idea that I could just disappear. My mother repeatedly cried out, “Why?” as she rushed me to the hospital after my overdose. I looked her straight in the eyes and said, “I just wanted to disappear.” She began to sob even louder at my response and I felt the first tinge of remorse for what I’d done, but it was too late. I had convinced myself that life would go on like I never stepped foot on the earth, but I then realized I was wrong. I mattered to her.

After spending weeks in recovery my entire perspective of life changed. The phrase “I Matter, You Matter, We Matter” now has a deeply-rooted value in my heart. I now understand the impact this phrase can have on a person who feels worthless. Being directly told “I Matter” while in recovery unlocked a feeling of hope within me. Just that small flicker of hope sparked a mindset of redemption I carry to this day. The “we’ in “We Matter” reminds me not to become bitter. Yes, people have hurt me and caused me to feel like I don’t matter, but forgiving those people is part of recovery. Bitter people blame others, but the statement “We Matter” reminds me their lives are just as valuable as my own. Lastly, “You Matter” stirs a purpose within me. I can now authentically sympathize with people dealing with suicidal thoughts. I want to use that understanding to help those people. Through experience, recovery, and growth, “I Matter, You Matter, We Matter” has shifted from a mindset of hope to redemption to purpose.

How Can You Apply The Concept of “I Matter, You Matter, We Matter” In Your Own Personal Life?

Most suicidal episodes are brief, in fact, around 48% of suicide attempts were made within 10 minutes of considering suicide as an option (*Duration of Suicidal Crises / Means Matter / Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, n.d.*). Most attempts are made quickly and impulsively. The best defense against the impulsive act of suicide is a readily available support system. While hotlines are important, they will never replace the value of a loved one reminding you that “You Matter”. This means suicide prevention is everyone’s responsibility.

Suicidal thoughts can be delayed, dismantled, or enhanced by how we treat others. After going through my own battle with suicidal thoughts and idealization, I understand how impactful a small act of kindness can be to bring hope to someone debating suicide. On the other hand, treating people negatively or even talking behind their backs can aid in their justification of

suicide. With that being said, we should treat everyone with kindness and respect regardless if we're friends with them, or even like them at all. I'm not saying to be best friends with everyone but you can still respect people while keeping a healthy distance from them. Give people the benefit of the doubt because you never know what they're going through behind their mask. Treat strangers with compassion and try to bring joy to everyone you meet. No act is too small- that smile could have been enough to keep that stranger in the hallway going.

People are naturally selfish and enjoy whenever people are jealous of them or sometimes even scared of them. It's so easy to fall into the trap of portraying a false version of ourselves to satisfy our own pride. But to apply the concept of "I Matter. You Matter, We Matter " into your own life then remember: don't fuel the fire of jealousy. While controlling other people's emotions is impossible, you can control the persona you present to the world. Be authentic to yourself and build genuine, meaningful relationships. This results in authentic support systems for those who are struggling with mental health and suicidal thoughts.

How can suicide prevention through "We Matter" be promoted within your school and community at large?

You can't take action against what you don't understand. Most people can't fully sympathize with someone dealing with a depression so deep it leads to suicidal idealization. This leaves the victim frustrated whenever someone blows off their emotions and cries for help. The solution to this is education. A friend may not understand what a suicidal person is feeling but they can know the signs to look for.

A few weeks after my attempt, I reached out to a close friend and shared my story of what happened, why'd I been gone, and what I'd been dealing with for the months leading up to the attempt. She was shocked and commented on how she'd missed the warning signs. This got

me thinking too, would I have been able to catch the warning signs of a close friend of mine? Hindsight is now 20/20, but most people are never exposed to what warning signs really look like, and it's not what you might expect. The hardest signs to recognize include: isolating from friends and family, talking about being a burden, extreme and constant fatigue, and seeking closure with the people around them (*Risk Factors, Protective Factors, and Warning Signs*, n.d.). Education, including real-life examples, in addition to the already successful annual "We Matter" week, could better prepare members of a community to support one another through a possible suicidal episode.

"I Matter, You Matter, We Matter" means something different to everyone but the end goal is the same: no more lives lost to suicide. It's inspiring whenever a community unites behind a common goal that will ultimately impact everyone's lives for the better.

References

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