

By Mia Foreman

I Matter, You Matter, We Matter

Suicide: a silent and restless evil that can affect and prey on anyone no matter their age, ethnicity, or beliefs. Suicide, and death in general, is one of few things that has a widespread effect on many people by the action of only one. That's why it is immensely important to combat it by raising awareness of not only how to recognize the signs but also what you can do to help prevent it, not only in your own life but in others. Suicide affects me. Suicide affects you. Suicide affects us. Yet there is another truth that rings even louder than these and it's that I matter. You matter. We matter.

I Matter

The I Matter, You Matter, We Matter concept is similar to that which is used on flights before takeoff. Generally, the flight assistant goes through the proper procedure in case of an emergency so that all the passengers would be the safest. They explain how to put your oxygen mask on first before trying to help others. This concept could be used in other areas of life such as in a student's life. A student must understand their own responsibilities before attempting to help someone else. Similarly, this theme is expressed in the We Matter message. The first step is knowing that I matter. If I am struggling with suicidal thoughts or poor mental health, I will be inadequate to help others struggling with the same thing. The first step is to understand that I matter. I am loved not only by those around me but by One who is above all things. As a believer in Christ, I can confidently say that I am loved by God and chosen by Him. Knowing this in my heart brings a new level of peace and hope. When I understand this and can remind myself of it in trying times then I am equipped to help those around me.

You Matter

Now that I have a hope and a future and understand the importance of me being on this earth for such a time as this, I am able to help you, my neighbor, my friend, my brother, my grocer. “You” are anyone I come in contact with on a day-to-day basis. Maybe you are someone I’ve known for six years, or maybe I just met you four days ago. Either way, I am able to help you because I have put my oxygen mask on. I know where my identity lies and want to spread that understanding to you. This is where the responsibility of awareness becomes two-sided. First, I must be able to recognize signs of distress, self-harm, or any other number of things to be able to help you, but sometimes those signs are not easily recognizable, and “you” share a responsibility to reach out. Yes, you matter whether you reach out or not, but having someone to reach out to is so valuable because it will aid the healing process. If “you” do not reach out or open up, others may not know how to help you. Even though it’s often uncomfortable or seemingly impossible to talk about our struggles or thoughts it will help crucially in the end.

Personal Testimony

Looking back to my sophomore year of high school, I can admit that it was a dark time of my life. I felt alone and isolated from my friends, from the boy I was talking to, and from my family but felt like I had nowhere to turn. I was always in my head but could never seem to get out and I wished away that year so much. Although I did not have suicidal thoughts or carry out self-harm, looking back I believe I was closer to those things than I realized. By the grace of God these thoughts and feelings only lasted about a year, but looking back I’ve come to realize that I was isolating myself. No one was pushing me away. No one was physically harming me or verbally abusing me. I had people all around me who were ready to listen and ready to help, but I had turned completely inwardly and relied on myself to find peace, hope, and comfort. But those

things never came as long as I had a self-centered focus. It was not until I started reaching out to my mom, to friends, and most importantly to the Lord that I was overcome with peace. Everyone has a different story and not everyone has the resources that I was blessed with, but there will always be someone for you to talk to. It just takes a simple conversation, a call for help, or a prayer for wisdom and guidance to realize that “you” matter.

We Matter

Once the first two steps are recognized and we can truthfully say and believe that I matter and that you matter, we are able to join hand-in-hand to spread this message to countless more people. A domino effect will begin to occur as you and I tell our friends, our acquaintances, and our families that they matter and as they go and tell others who in turn tell others about this freeing and joyful message. Soon what began as one person turns to two which turns to 20 which turns to 30,000. This message cannot only spread hope for this life on earth but also spread eternal hope. Romans 8:28 says that “we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (ESV).

We Matter Week

We Matter week is not something that we should recognize only one week out of the year. Rather we should be reminded every day that I matter, that you matter, and that we matter. Of course, we cannot dedicate every single week of the year as “We Matter Week” but there are small and effective ways to keep that message on our minds and to be ready to share it with those we interact with. The first way to do this is by not taking suicide or suicide awareness lightly. So often this issue is overlooked and used as the punchline for jokes or a thoughtless phrase used to express frustration. But the seriousness of the matter is often thrown out the window predominantly in middle and high school. All it takes is a simple “don’t say that,” “please don’t

use this serious issue, lightly,” or “do you know what you’re saying?” I guarantee that there will be ridicule that comes for saying these things, but standing up for what’s right has never been an easy thing and will not get any easier. Another way to promote suicide prevention on a larger scale is by letting people know that they matter whether it is by posting on social media, hanging a flyer on the school bulletin board, or even finding opportunities to speak about it whether with a small group of people or in front of a crowd.

Suicide Awareness

Suicide does not discriminate and neither should raising awareness of it. Raising awareness for suicide will have an impact on more people than you know even when you feel no one hears the message or responds positively. Remember that one person who knows where their value lies can affect another person and they can go out and reach thousands of people. Living in fear of speaking up may be the easy way out, but proclaiming the truth that we matter will save lives.

References

Romans 8:28 ESV - - *Bible Gateway*. (n.d.). [Www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A28&version=ESV>