

Inheritance

When my father, Edward, succumbed to depression and anxiety on March 13, 2006 he was only 52 years old. I was 20, my sister, 18, and our twin brothers just freshmen in high school. Within 24 hours of his passing, I became a parent when I was granted emergency custody of my minor siblings. I worked a typical 20-something-year-old job, had no place of my own to live, and had no idea how to raise two teenagers let alone help them, as well as myself, get through such a traumatic event.

Although we may never understand why he felt suicide was his only option, I do know just HOW MUCH he loved me and my siblings. I am a parent myself now (to a child other than my siblings), so I can attest to the love one has for their children. Having experienced this love only makes me try to comprehend the level of mental anguish he must have been under in order for him to leave us the way he did. As natural as it is to need answers, we must understand that this is not something that can be justified or rationalized, and that is okay.

Sometimes, he would try to explain his anxiety to me as a physical feeling in his body that literally made him feel ill. As a typical young adult with no actual problems, I could not possibly comprehend what he was going through. The day he died I had a horrific realization of what he had been trying to portray to me; it was almost as if my dad was the host and anxiety, the demon, exited his body at the last beat of his heart and transplanted itself within me, and I have spent the years following his passing trying to exorcise that demon from my body and my brain. This was my inheritance. The thing is, he may have seen this as a way out, or the only option to end the pain, but in actuality all his suicide did was transfer that pain to everyone who loved him, especially his children. I truly believe that if our father would have stopped to process that for a moment, he would still be here today.

Here we are, 11 years later, and I don't miss him any less than I did back then. He has missed the birth of his grandchildren, he was not there to walk my sister and I down the aisle or see my brothers graduate from high school; all things I know he was incapable of considering at his lowest point, blinded by his own internal struggles. Every single time something good happens in our lives it is followed by a moment of sadness along with the thought, "I wish my dad were here to see this.". With the support of each other, our family, friends, therapy and survivors of suicide grief groups (which were invaluable to me in the beginning of this journey) we have made it through what was truly the worse experience of our lives.

Our story is not over; this is something we will struggle with for the rest of our lives. We have found our new 'normal'. The world keeps spinning, the birds keep chirping, and if you can look up from your sadness long enough, you will even start to hear them again. Time does not heal all wounds, but it does make things more bearable. It is possible to go on after your loved one is gone, impossible as it may seem in those first moments.

When you take your own life your pain and suffering does not die with you. It is inherited by your loved ones. No matter how much time goes on, how much therapy we attend, or how much support we have WE still have to live our lives without YOU in it. I can tell you first hand that this is something that your family and friends will never truly recover from. You will change your life and everyone's you know in the worse possible way. Every happy moment for the rest of their lives cannot be fully celebrated because it is overshadowed by the fact that you are not there to celebrate with them. Yes, you are THAT important. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem and it is never, ever, the answer.