

## Jen's Message of Hope to Someone that is Having Thoughts of Suicide

Hi, I'm Jen and this is what I want you to know. Having thoughts of suicide may be both alarming as well as comforting to you. While it scares a lot of people to have reached this dark "stuck" place, it can also feel like a relief to think that there is a way out. I don't pretend to know just what you are thinking or feeling right now, but I know that it is really hard & painful stuff and I'm so sorry for that. I know what it is to visit dark places where you do not see a door leading out. And I have had several deep connections with people who were suicidal and have been with them in their pain and witnessed their journey to finding health and relative happiness, sometimes even for the very first time in their lives. I'm here to tell you that there is reason for hope. It gets better. You may be feeling suicidal because you have really difficult life circumstances right now... Perhaps you've lost someone you love. Maybe you have an addiction that you don't feel you can overcome. Perhaps you are struggling with school or finances, or you have a lot of conflict with the people in your life. You may be struggling with shame—perhaps you are coming to terms with ways that you feel "different" from your family or your friends. Maybe you are struggling with a crisis of faith or perhaps you are coming to terms with your sexuality or your sense of gender identity. Perhaps you are afraid of rejection if people were to know the true you. Maybe you have a history of trauma, such as sexual or physical abuse, that you can't get out of your head or that feels permanently damaging. Maybe you feel that you have never truly been loved. Maybe you have a hard time loving yourself. You may be someone who struggles with mental illness and you wonder if you will ever live life without struggle. The list of internal and external struggles we grapple with as a society are endless. And we don't always have the resources for coping or overcoming these struggles. When the pain outweighs our resources, this is when we often start looking for the escape hatch—and suicide can sometimes feel like that magic way out. The problem, of course, is that suicide is a permanent—an irreversible—solution to what is often a temporary period of pain. Even if some of the problems with which we grapple are fairly long-term, our perspective about AND our ability to handle and learn from these problems can change drastically. And they can change in ways that are life altering in very positive directions. We've all heard stories about the person who is diagnosed with a terminal illness and who, after months of coming to terms with it, says unequivocally, that the illness was the "best thing that ever happened to [them]". This is because the illness caused them to re-evaluate their lives, perhaps to really start living for the first time, to take care of unfinished business, to live life in the present... People who survive a suicide attempt often say the same kinds of things—they are thankful for the second chance to really live, to improve their circumstances, to heal, to grow, to love more fully both themselves and others... I hope you will choose life. I hope you will choose to hang in there with the pain, and to get help. I care. Others care. You are a just a little human being on this great big planet—just like the rest of us—someone that is simply doing the best that he or she can. Sometimes we need help outside of ourselves to make the changes that we need to make. If you are not already in therapy, please consider finding a therapist, a good therapist, that can help you along your journey. Know that death by suicide is not the ending of pain. It is the spreading of pain. You are part of the greater whole—without you, something is missing, something/someone is lost and this hurts all of us. Please know it gets better—hold onto hope. Get help. If you are a student at HSU, come to the Counseling Center or call our phone line (707-826-3236) anytime to get support. Thanks for listening.