

ENDING IT: SOMETIMES YOU WANT TO—BUT DON'T

DR. BOB BAUGHER

Grief Digest Magazine, January 2013

When it first happened, you didn't know how you would survive the moment. When somehow you got through that terrible day, you woke up the next day and found yourself still alive.

Days went by, some of them in a blur. People moved around you, words came out of their mouths—most of their utterances lost to the moment.

Gestures of comfort were offered in an attempt to ease your pain. Looks on faces that exposed the truth that they, like you, felt helpless to really do or say anything that could change what had happened. Your brain, in a whirl of confusion.

Then, it was a week.

How could a week have gone by? One hundred sixty-eight hours without your loved one. How could you have lived those first seven days?

But you did.

As the days moved on into weeks and months, you may have found yourself with thoughts that, at the time, seemed to make sense in a world gone senseless. Your thoughts may have formed into a plan. A plan that seemed the only way to cope with the unremitting pain. A plan to end your life. It was your secret. No one knew. No one suspected.

Is it your secret now? Why would you ever consider such a thing?

One answer is that it was your mind's way of planning an escape from an inescapable prison of horror.

With one act of life termination you could perhaps solve two problems: you could end the pain—and more importantly—you could be with your loved one.

Perhaps as you read this, the plan is still there—sitting somewhere in your brain. You may have thought that this secret plan was so secret that no one would know—no one would suspect that you would ever consider taking your own life, especially after the devastation that the ending of one precious life has caused your family and friends.

Your plan may have been vague at first. For some people it may have gone like this:

“I’m not going to do anything to actively end my life, but if I’m driving down the street and a semi-truck is heading towards me, I’m just going to let it happen.”

Or perhaps you’ve given up wearing your seatbelt, or you’re taking more chances when driving, such as speeding or some other form of negligent driving. “Go ahead, police officer, stop me and give me a tongue-lashing about how I shouldn’t be driving like that. And, when you’re done with your little speech, I will let you have it with explicit details of the way my loved one died. I can’t wait to see the look on your face when I’m done.”

Maybe your risk-taking involves alcohol or pill-taking, or both. Or there may be some other risks you are taking while convincing yourself with the thought, “If it’s meant to be, so be it.”

Perhaps you have considered a specific method that will end your life. You may have a gun or a rifle. Or pills or a rope, a knife, razor blades, or a hose for carbon monoxide. Or you may have considered jumping to end your life.

If any of this is true for you, I am going to say four vital things to you:

1. Millions upon millions of people in grief have had these exact thoughts. As you read these words, there are people out there right now who are considering ending their life because the death of their loved one has convinced them that their life is already over. If you put your life-ending thoughts in context with millions of other people, then such thoughts can only be considered somewhat normal. Normal? Yes. Our brain can come up with countless ideas, plans, feelings, and thoughts. However, as soon as these thoughts become behaviors that move into actions, then the line has been crossed. It’s one thing to think it. It’s quite another to behave it.
2. Think of all the pain you and your family and friends have been in since the day your loved one died. Then, think of the additional pain your death would cause for each person. I know, it doesn’t seem fair to hold up this picture to you just at a time when you are in so much pain. But, I do it because it is absolutely true.
3. If your life-ending thoughts have persisted to the point where you have taken steps or feel you will take steps toward ending your life, tell someone. Get the words out of your mouth. Who is the best person to tell at this point? It should be someone you trust. Someone who is going to take you seriously. Someone who will make sure you get help. It could be a friend, a relative, a counselor, a person on the crisis line, a religious leader, your doctor, or the **Suicide Hotline at 1(800)273-8255**.

4. Finally, here is one of the most important facts on human emotion:

As terrible as you feel right now, you will not feel this way forever.
You won't.

Don't believe this? Ask any parent who has experienced the death of a child.

Ask any man or woman who is living each day without their beloved partner.

Ask any child or adult whose brother or sister or parent has left this earth.

They will likely say that, while they are never back to the way they felt prior to the death, they found that, with time, they began to feel better. And they want you to know that you will, too.

You will.

Now, stop reading this and do something that will save your life—even if you don't feel like it.

It's what your loved one would want for you, isn't it?