

## The 4-Way Rotary Test Challenges Suicide

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Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in America. It is the second leading cause of death among teenagers. On average, there are one hundred and thirty suicides a day. That's one death every eleven minutes. In 2019, forty-seven thousand five hundred and eleven people died this way. That same year, there were an estimated 1.38 million suicide attempts. Yet, in our society, these people are rejected. Ridiculed. Teased and abused. Why? I don't know. But as soon as I saw this contest, I saw it as an opportunity to change things. Today, in this essay, I am going to be the speaking voice of the millions of American teens that feel lost, helpless, afraid, and ultimately just want to give up. I am going to tell stories of their hurt and suffering, in hopes that it might save just one person's life.

Suicide has been prevalent in my life ever since sixth grade. I clearly remember one kid I still know to this day. He often made self-deprecating jokes, and put himself down quite often. He even sometimes played that one game where you stab something sharp in between your fingers in hopes you miss. I didn't think much of it until one day, when he started cutting himself. Vividly, I see the picture in my mind of him walking out of the bathroom, blood on his hoodie. Another picture, this time of him taking a sharp ruler and slicing his wrists. I didn't realize that he was suicidal. I didn't think much of it, at the time.

Now, this is where my story comes in. That kid? I don't really know much about him. I hope he's better. However, I know that that day changed my life. A few months later, I was having a bad day for whatever reason, and I didn't really know what to do. So, following his example, I took a sharp ruler and gently scratched myself. I had no idea what I was doing, just that I needed a way to release pressure. A year or so passed, and I actually never thought of that day again. My mental state got worse, but everyone I knew dismissed it as teenage moodiness, so I did too. Then the unthinkable happened. My brother somehow was hit in the head with a hammer and was rushed to Urgent Care. I was sitting in the car on the opposite side of town when it happened. My dad got the call and rushed home with me. Both of us were praying for his life. Unfortunately, as my parents took him to Urgent Care, they left me home alone with my fear and desperation. I, in shock and anxiety, took my knife and nicked my wrists. Now, nearly a year

later, I have the opportunity to share my story and tie it in with some helpful guidelines from Atascadero's Rotary club. This brings me to my first tie-in: Is it (suicide) the truth?

Is suicide the truth? Well, it depends on what you mean. Is it a real, true struggle many people have? Yes, absolutely. It is a valid, real problem that needs to be fixed and helped. However, if we're asking if the thoughts suicidal thinking puts into your head are the truth, the answer is absolutely not. Suicide tells you you're worthless. It tells you you're not good enough. It says you shouldn't be around because no one will miss you. But no! No, no no! Those are all lies! And if these are lies, they cannot be truths. Therefore, that goes against the first Rotary rule: It is NOT the truth.

Question two: Is it fair to all concerned? Again, the answer is no! Suicide is a selfish act. It is not usually done with selfish intention, but it causes hurt and pain to everyone left behind. It is thoughtless, done out of hopelessness and desperation. The person is so wrapped up in the pain of the moment, all they can think about is how they would be better off gone. They are not thinking about how their actions will affect everyone who loves them. When a person kills themselves, it does not improve anyone's circumstances, it just leaves behind hurt and pain. It is unfair and it messes up many lives afterwards. All in all, suicide is selfish and unfair. The answer to question two is no, also.

Question three: Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Let me tell you a quick story. I have a group of friends, very dear to me, whom I had trusted with my 'secret'. I thought that they were my very best friends because they knew my story. However, I was so wrapped up in my problems that I failed to notice that their knowledge of my suicidal thoughts was wearing on them. Eventually, one of these friends cracked and told their mom, who in turn was about to call the police when my parents stepped in. No matter how much you think telling a peer will strengthen your relationship, I can guarantee that it won't. It will only hurt the other person. Now, I must put in a quick disclaimer: this only applies to peers. I promise you, they can't handle your 'secret'. However, a trusted adult can help you get help and get better. If you are on the fence about telling someone about your problems, please do it, as it could save you. Anyways, the answer to question three is no again.

The fourth and final question: Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Well, first we must break down who exactly 'all concerned' is. The first person concerned is you. My mom has a saying she has told me my whole life, "What if the minute you killed yourself was the minute things got better? What if, as soon as you jumped, was the minute when all your problems got solved. Things will always get better, and if they don't, God will deliver you back into his arms." It is NOT beneficial for you, as you are giving up all hope and giving into the lies we talked about earlier. Ultimately, you die. That's it. No take backs, accidents, or 'I'm sorrrys.' The next party concerned is your family. I don't know what your home life is like, but friends can be family too. I guarantee you will be missed. Someone will be broken afterwards. So, to wrap it up, the answer to question four is no once again.

To conclude this essay, I would like to reiterate my most important points. First, and most importantly, if you or someone you know is considering suicide, please get help or help the



person. You could be the difference in their lives. Be kind and give them a reason to live. Secondly, on my first question, suicide, while an appealing way out of life for some, is completely a lie. Everything your mind tells you is a lie! Worthless, stupid, ugly, fat, whatever negativity, it is all a lie! Thirdly, to sum up questions two and three, suicide is selfish, unfair, and only hurts everyone who loves you. If you can't live for yourself, live for them. Lastly, I would like to brush over once again the fact that suicide is not beneficial for anyone, including yourself. In conclusion, does suicide pass the four way Rotary test? Absolutely not. As capable Rotarians, I would like to ask you to help the teens who are our future. Please, in any way you can, help them. As someone recovering from the thoughts that filled my mind, I can tell you that the best way to help is to be kind and to let people know they are valued. Rotarians, I challenge you to make a difference. Thank you for your time and this opportunity.