

# can you hear me?



stories of people who have survived suicide attempts

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## Surviving My Suicide Attempt

*Multimedia journalist, writer, photographer and filmmaker Glennisha Morgan contributed the following essay to the website of Ebony magazine on December 30. Learn more about her work at [www.glennishamorgan.com](http://www.glennishamorgan.com) or follow her on Twitter (@GlennishaMorgan).*



Photo of Ms. Morgan courtesy of her blog ([www.glennishamorgan.com](http://www.glennishamorgan.com)).

During my senior year of high school, I tried to commit suicide. I took a handful of a concoction of my mother's prescribed medicine and went to sleep. The next morning, I woke up and realized that I was still alive. My suicide attempt had failed and I was terrified. My heart was beating extremely fast, my wrists were swollen and I was in shock. As I lay in bed the night before crying my eyes out, I was sure that it was over. I had made a drastic decision to end everything.

At the time, my mother and I were going through a very rough patch. I thought that she didn't love me and if my mother didn't love me, no one else would. Trembling and afraid with eyes wide as saucers, I informed my mother of what I had done. Her response was not one I had expected, validating the reason why I had attempted suicide in the first place. "You better hope that they don't take my baby away from me because of you," she said, referring to my younger sister.

My mother took me to a local Detroit hospital, where nurses tied my arms and legs to the bed. I was spared a trip to a mental institution because my mother assured doctors that I would seek counseling with the pastors of my church, who both rushed to the hospital when they heard the news. I don't recall contemplating suicide prior to that traumatic night, but I'm definitely sure that I suffered from depression throughout high school. As a teenager, I'm not sure that I knew how to identify depression, let alone feel comfortable enough to express to others how I was feeling. And as a young Black girl growing up in one of the nation's toughest cities, I was taught to always remain "strong."

My pastors had kept their word in regards to counseling me and I began to share my angst with fellow teenagers and friends during our weekly youth group at church. Some of the young adults in my place of worship had also made it a point to spend time with me.

My suicide attempt almost seems like something that never happened. Partly because the embarrassment of it all caused me suppress it and never speak a word about it until now.

This April, the Black online community learned about the death of "For Brown Girls" founder Karyn Washington. In September, there was actress and singer Simone Battle. Just this month, beautiful and successful Miss Jessie's\* co-founder Titi Branch took her own life. At the

*\*Miss Jessie's is a salon in New York City that specializes in natural African-American hair and a line of black hair care products.*



TSPN works across the state to eliminate the stigma of suicide and educate communities about the warning signs of suicide, with the ultimate goal of reducing suicide rates in the state of Tennessee.

TSPN's continued success is due in large part to volunteers willing to donate their time and energy.

If you would like to volunteer with TSPN, please call (615) 297-1077 or e-mail [tspn@tspn.org](mailto:tspn@tspn.org).

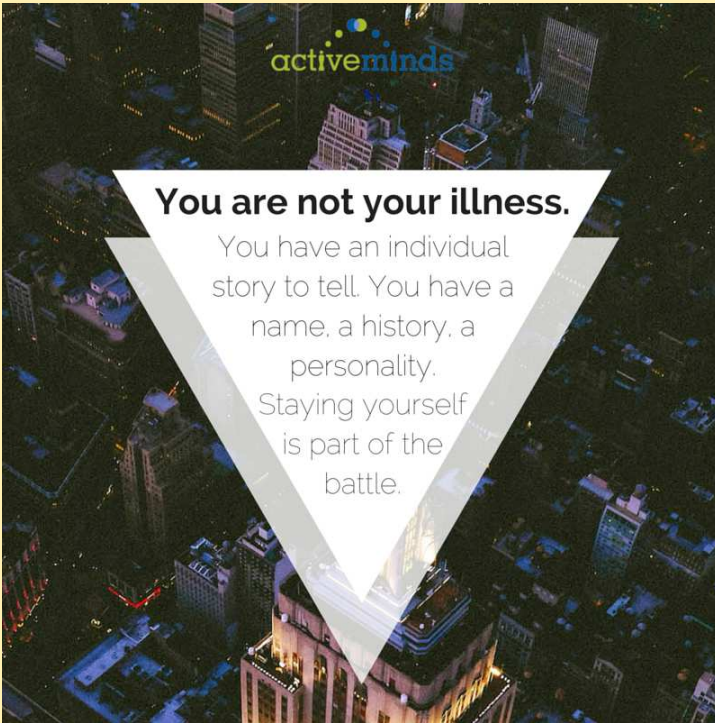
## Surviving My Suicide Attempt (continued)

ages of 22, 25 and 45, respectively, they chose to die. It was reading about these women that caused me to speak out about my own experience. Looking at their photos, I saw myself. A girl, who once suffered in silence. Often seen with a huge smile on my face and eager to talk about the latest mixtape, headline, or a new recipe, my family and friends would probably never know if I was feeling down. I'd be lying if I said that I don't ever get depressed, feel worried or anxious, but I'm happy to know that I have a

few close friends that I have no qualms about confiding in them when the world has taken a toll on me. I also know that there is absolutely nothing wrong with seeking counsel or professional help when it all becomes too much.

As Black women, we tend to carry the burdens of the world on our shoulders and often feel that we have to live up to this problematic "strong Black woman" notion. We are human and just like everybody else sometimes the load becomes entirely too heavy, breaking us down into little pieces, reflecting back at us waiting to be mended together. We must know that self care is important and okay. And no matter who we think doesn't love us and regardless of the fact that mainstream media and the world tells us that we're incapable of being loved, we must know that the greatest love of all is the love of self. Let's love ourselves enough to know when we need to shut it down and take a break. Let's love ourselves enough to know when we need to put ourselves before others. Let's love ourselves enough to know that when we're no good to ourselves, we're no good to anyone else. And let's love ourselves enough to know that if we need to seek help, that it's an act of self preservation.

In the words of Audre Lorde, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."



### You are not your illness.

You have an individual story to tell. You have a name, a history, a personality. Staying yourself is part of the battle.

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says, 'I'll try again tomorrow'".

Mary Anne Radmacher

## Suicide Awareness Travelling Art Project 2015 “Inside the Darkness”

Be a part of this year’s travelling art instillation by creating a mask that expels your innermost feelings about suicide or the person who you lost, or your own deepest feelings about being a survivor or attempt survivor.

TSPN is one of the sponsors for this year’s art project workshops so join us on our day

**WHEN: MAY 12, 2015**

**TIME: 6PM – 9PM**

**WHERE:**  
Your Heart On Art Studio  
265 White Bridge Road  
Nashville, TN 37209

**COST: FREE**



**YOU MUST REGISTER ONLINE**

<http://yourheartonart.com/classes/survivors-therapeutic-workshops>

SPACE IS LIMITED

No walk-ins will be permitted  
If you cannot make this workshop there are others that are available for you to participate in

Visit [www.yourheartonart.org](http://www.yourheartonart.org) for more information about this project or call 615-456-3777

## Suicide Anonymous

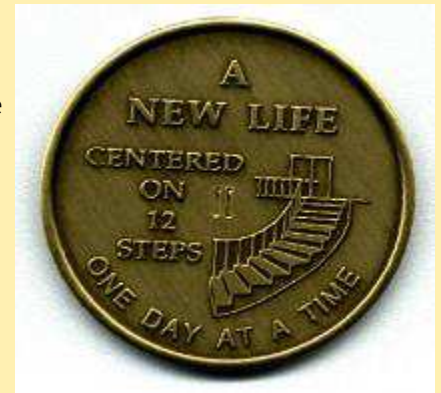
Suicide Anonymous (SA) is a self-help program based on the model of Alcoholics Anonymous. It provides a safe environment for people to share their struggles with suicide and to develop strategies for recovery from suicidal preoccupation and behavior.

Suicidal people do not have safe places to talk honestly about their struggles with suicide. The stigma towards suicide pervades every segment of our society, including religious organizations and even the mental health field. SA, therefore, exists to offer a support system for survivors, to make a distinction between the suicide attempt and the person involved, to cast off the societal stigma that too often plagues the survivor, and to develop strategies for mutual support and healing.

During each meeting, a chairperson presents topics and members share their experiences or simply listen. Members also provide updates about how they are dealing with their suicidal impulses. Talking openly about suicide with people who understand the problem lessens the shame and stigma, combats isolation, and shows that it is safe to reach out for support in a crisis. In sharing their stories, members overcome the shame and stigma of a life of struggle with suicide. Meanwhile, listeners identify with the story or break through denial of the extent of their own struggles.

New participants pick experienced members to guide them through the Twelve Steps model. They also exchange phone numbers with group members as a resource for crises between meetings. Members learn to reach out to fellow members for support in a suicidal crisis. They also get to experience the other end of a suicide crisis.

Members also select bottom-line behaviors for themselves. These are component behaviors of suicidality like hoarding pills, suicidal fantasies, compulsively driving through cemeteries, etc.. Members commit to stop bottom-line behaviors one day at a time, and these behaviors may change with progress in recovery.



Meeting times in Tennessee	Skype /phone available
Every Sunday, 6:30 PM Central / 7:30 PM Eastern Room 223, Hope Presbyterian Church 8500 Walnut Grove Road Cordova, TN 38018	Yes (e-mail <a href="mailto:suicide.anonymous0811@gmail.com">suicide.anonymous0811@gmail.com</a> one hour prior to meeting start)
Every Thursday, 5:30 PM Central / 6:30 PM Eastern Psychological Trauma & Wellness Center 5158 Stage Road, Suite 120 Memphis, TN 38134	No
Third Tuesday, 6 PM Central / 7 PM Eastern Room 111, Cornerstone of Recovery 4726 Alcoa Highway Louisville, TN 37777	No

The SA website [suicideanonymous.net](http://suicideanonymous.net) features information on groups outside Tennessee with Skype/phone capability. The site also offers the full text of the *Little Book*, the guiding document of Suicide Anonymous, which discusses the problem of suicide addiction from the viewpoint of the person affected.

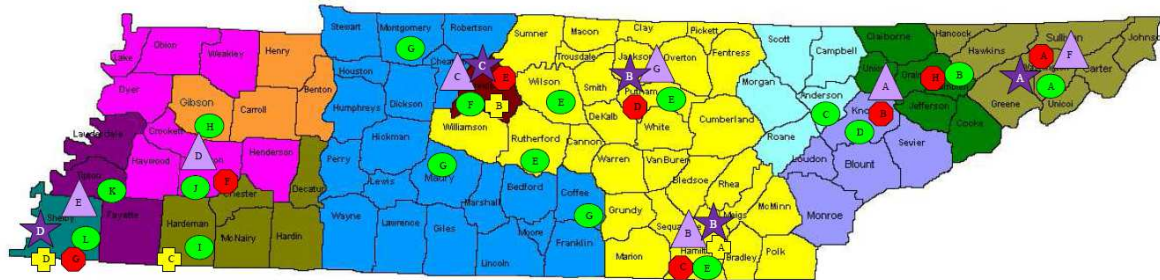
Interested parties may also contact the group directly at [info@suicideanonymous.net](mailto:info@suicideanonymous.net) or (901) 654-7673.

"can you hear me?" wants your articles, poetry, prose, and artwork for the next issue and the ones to come. We'll also need suggestions and recommendations on how we can make it better.

If there's a piece you want to submit to the newsletter, send it to [tspn@tspn.org](mailto:tspn@tspn.org) with the subject line "CYMH Submission".

Feedback and suggestions can also be sent to this address with the subject line "CYHM Feedback".

## Crisis Resources in Your Area



CRISIS TEAMS – CRISIS STABILIZATION UNITS – REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTES – MEDICALLY MONITORED CRISIS WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT

**Mobile Crisis Teams** ●

- A Frontier Health
- B Cherokee Health Systems
- C Ridgeview Psychiatric Hospital & Center
- D Helen Ross McNabb
- E Volunteer Behavioral Health
- F Mental Health Co-Operative
- G Centerstone Community MHC
- H Carey Counseling Center
- I Quinco Community MHC
- J Pathways of Tennessee
- K Professional Care Services
- L Alliance Healthcare Services

**Crisis Stabilization Units/Walk-in Center** ●

- A Frontier Health
- B Helen Ross McNabb Center
- C Volunteer Behavioral Health – Chattanooga
- D Volunteer Behavioral Health – Cookeville
- E Mental Health Co-Operative
- F Pathways of Tennessee
- G Alliance Healthcare Services
- H Cherokee Health Systems

**RMHI** ☒

- A Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute
- B Middle TN Mental Health Institute
- C Western Mental Health Institute
- D Memphis Mental Health Institute

**MMCWM** ▲

- A Helen Ross McNabb
- B CADAS
- C Buffalo Valley
- D Pathways
- E Serenity
- F Frontier
- G Volunteer

**Respite Services** ★

- A Frontier Health
- B Volunteer Behavioral Health
- C Mental Health Co-Operative
- D Alliance Healthcare Services

10/16/14

This map of crisis response teams and facilities is provided to TSPN courtesy of Melissa Sparks, Director of the Office of Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention within the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse's Division of Mental Health Services. More information about these facilities is available from Ms. Sparks at (615) 253-4641 or [melissa.sparks@tn.gov](mailto:melissa.sparks@tn.gov).

## Need Help Right Now?

Feelings of hopelessness, feeling trapped, feeling like a burden to others, increased alcohol or drug consumption, sleeping too little or too much, and withdrawing or feeling isolated from others are signs that you or a loved one may need help now.

If you or a loved one are feeling suicidal, please seek help immediately. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or visit [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

**NATIONAL**  
**SUICIDE**  
**PREVENTION**  
**LIFELINE™**  
**1-800-273-TALK**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)