

can you hear me?



stories of people who have survived suicide attempts

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Clarke's Story

Clarke Bynum posted this essay on his Facebook page on September 28, during TSPN's statewide Suicide Prevention Awareness Month observance. He has granted TSPN permission to reprint this post. Clarke is currently an associate instructor at Studio C, a broadcast and recording production facility in Nashville.

September is Suicide prevention month.

I have been waffling on whether or not to share a bit of my story, but I am in a much better place today and feel comfortable sharing.

If you choose to read this, please read all the way through. I swear it gets very positive.

As some of you who know me personally know me not much of this will come as a surprise.

When I was 15 I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for a suicide attempt. Things after that were stagnant at indifference towards my attempt and I was not open about any of my feelings or what was going on. I had my dips and my rises from there.

Often at school or other social events I would play the character of the class clown. It was easy. The jokes didn't have to be funny; I just had to be ridiculous. This served many purposes. I would deflect any serious comment about life in general. I could make self-deprecating jokes and laugh at them with those around me because they were based around the character I had created. I could get the nastiest comments thrown at my and not care because they hit the clown. Not me.

All the while I never addressed any of my issues. I had the feeling of being worthless as early as 3rd grade. Not sure if there is a month dedicated to OCD, but that has a lot to do with what drives the depression. I noticed these back in 1st grade, when I would count peoples stripes on their shirts. Around 3rd or 5th grade is when I felt the strong desire to tell the people how many stripes were on their shirts. I got a few funny comments from that as you can imagine.

The big kicker for me was feeling like I was a waste of space on this planet. A feeling that on a planet that is already overpopulated why should I waste resources and time of others when i feel as though all my endeavors are worthless.



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.

Clarke's Story (continued)

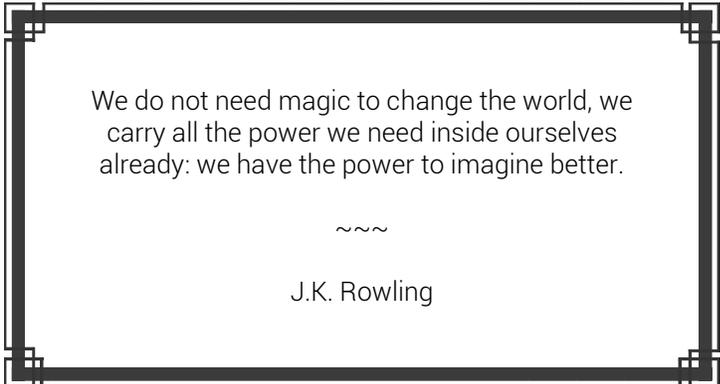
That is all about the past and I write it here because I think it is important to give a bigger picture with these subjects. Especially for those of you who are not depressed. I am not saying second-guess your funny friends' happiness but I have never met anyone who had even the slightest hint of what I was doing that was not absolutely miserable.

I am leaving out lots of details and points that I simply do not want to go over on a facebook post this public. The OCD, many people joke about this disorder and claim to have it, etc etc. That is extremely insulting. It is an all consuming disease. There have been times where I literally could not function normally because of this. I was at diving practice once and could not saying the word bucket. My voice was hoarse and my lips were raw and in pain. I had to leave early and it took hours for it to finally stop. Another example is when I ironed every piece of clothing I owned. Many people found that to be funny. I spent well over four hours ironing my clothes and throwing them against a wall and sobbing hysterically and unable to move on with my life until I "Finished" the job.

A date I have not shared with anyone other than my current therapist is that this past November is when the suicidal thoughts came back. It was a long time building. I had "had enough" for lack of a better term. I did not tell a soul how low I really was. I had been back on antidepressants for a while at this point.

Skip ahead to March. The thoughts became much stronger and a tad more unmanageable. Each night I hoped not to wake up the next morning. This came and went for a while. In late May, I made the decision on how I was going to die and a general timeline. I did things starting in January of this past year that I had on my bucket list. I jumped on a moving train with one of my best friends and we had a hell of a time. I got a girl's number within our first meeting. All kinds of dumb things that I had never done before. None of them really bad. Just small things I had always been too scared to do. Or try.

Skip ahead to July 23rd at 3:00 AM in St. Louis. I had known for about a month that this was the night it was going to happen. I was at my lowest low. Feeling worthless. Hopeless. Unimportant. A waste of space and resources. I couldn't stop hearing those thoughts running in and out of my head. I called a few random people that i had opened up to a bit. No one picked up, obviously. I had an 85-page suicide note written. Instructions on how to get into my phone and laptop to read it. I put my phone on audio record and started talking about why I was doing this. I left specific messages for important people in my life. I have since deleted this audio file. I half-regret deleting it.



We do not need magic to change the world, we
carry all the power we need inside ourselves
already: we have the power to imagine better.

~~~

J.K. Rowling

I had used heroin just a few times before this, for the pure purpose of learning how to do it—how to hit the vein, how to mix it. etc. etc. I started taking shot after shot. I sat in a chair on the roof of the building we were staying in. I stared out over the cityscape.

I will not go into detail about what happened next as it is extremely personal and I cant think about it without tearing up pretty heavily.

I have no idea how much time passed, but I felt a thud. My chest hurt really bad and I was gasping for breath on the ground. I had pissed myself. My hands were blue and I could not move any part of my body other than my head for a few minutes. I slowly gained motion back and feeling and was able to breath regularly after a few hours. Based on some other aspects of what happened that I am not willing to share, I died briefly, and fell out of the chair and hit the corner of a step and I guess started my heart back up.

I walked back downstairs. The sun was coming up at this point. I showered and went to bed. Woke up the next morning. I did not tell anyone what had happened. I was driving back by myself and stopped in a gas station to get some snacks for the ride back. Still feeling the euphoria from the drugs. That stopped some where in the gas station and it all hit at once. I broke down and sobbed hardcore.

## Clarke's Story (continued)

I assumed, like many, that because I had even touched heroin I was an addict. We found a rehab center that did dual diagnosis. It was a bit of a disaster for me. The mental health portion was not addressed at all. I kept getting pigeon-holed as an addict when that was not my problem and the depression and OCD were kind of pushed aside.

The good news, though, after the attempt and being so close to being dead I had a paradigm shift on life. I wanted to be alive. I wanted to move forward with life and I wanted to be happy. After about two weeks, I was legitimately at the happiest I have ever been. This emotional feeling has stayed with me. I have had a few dips but nothing major and nothing scary.

I am now staying at an intensive outpatient group home while I am at this level of mental stability so that I can learn the tools I need to be able to handle my brain chemistry. It has been a hell of a journey and for the first time in my life I am excited about what is to come. I am excited to start putting in real effort in my passions and my life. I am excited to be able to be there for people without hiding the misery i face myself. I am excited to be able to be honest with others and be myself.

I have been 68 days sober. I do not look at that number as "Oh look at that, I have not done any drugs in 68 days." I look at that as "Oh look at that, I have 68 days of wanting to be alive." I cannot wait to wake up every morning and see what the day has in store for me. The people I will meet. The situations I will see and be in. The funny things that happen around us every single day.

I will still have dips. I will still have OCD episodes, but I am no longer scared.

I wrote this post to share my story and hope it can help someone. We all have that friend we have not talked to in long enough, or that relative or just anyone. Reach out to those around you. Even if they are doing great. Share the love. Live life the way you want to live it.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms." ~~~ Henry David Thoreau

I know there were a lot of dark things in this post and a lot that is uncomfortable to read and for that I am sorry. But I want everyone to know I have never been more hopeful or more excited to be alive.

If any of you on my friends list or not on my friends list needs anything feel free to reach out. I will do my best to be there for you. I know how troubling it is in times like that.

I am Clarke Bynum and this is who I am and I am proud of who I have become and am excited to see where I go.

" The *bravest* thing  
I ever did was  
*continuing* my life  
when I wanted to *die*."





## Lived Experience Healing Art



These 3 hour workshops are for anyone who has lived with the experience of suicidal thoughts or behaviors. YHOA is a safe place where others who can relate to thoughts of suicide come without shame or fear of judgment to create and express without having to use your words. A place where you will be met with the peer support of "me too".

**NO ART EXPERIENCE IS NEEDED AT ALL**  
(A minimum of 4 participants is required to hold workshop)

**FEE: \$45.00** Payment is required with registration.  
Class size is limited to 12

**Thursday, March 17, 2016**

**6:00 - 9:00 PM**



Register online at [www.yourheartonart.org](http://www.yourheartonart.org)

or call us at 615-456-3777 for more  
information about this and  
other workshops offered by YHOA.

All workshops are held at the  
**YHOA Art Studio**  
265 White Bridge Road  
Nashville, TN 37209

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

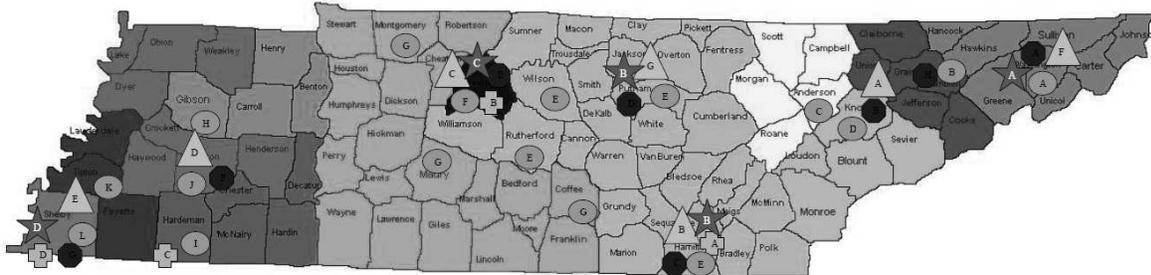
Interested parties may also contact the group directly at [info@suicideanonymous.net](mailto:info@suicideanonymous.net) or (901) 654-7673.

"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).

