Before You Kill Yourself . . .

Read these brutal facts about suicide

By Renée T. Lucero

You've decided to do it. Life is impossible. Suicide is your way out.

Fine—but before you kill yourself, there are some things you should know. I am a psychiatric nurse, and I see the results of suicide—when it works and, more often, when it doesn't. Consider, before you act, these facts:

Suicide is usually not successful. You think you know a way to guarantee it? Ask the 25-year-old who tried to electrocute himself. He lived. But both his arms are gone.

What about jumping? Ask John. He used to be intelligent, with an engaging sense of humor. That was before he leaped from a building. Now he's brain damaged and will always need care. He staggers and has seizures. He lives in a fog. But worst of all, he *knows* he used to be normal.

Even less violent methods can leave you crippled. What about pills? Ask the 12-year-old with extensive liver damage from an overdose. Have you ever seen anyone die of liver damage? It takes awhile. You turn yellow. It's a hard way to go.

No method is foolproof. What about a gun? Ask the 24-year-old who shot himself in the head. Now he drags one leg, has a useless arm, and no vision or hearing on one side. He lived through his "foolproof" suicide. You might too.

Suicide is not glamorous. You may picture a movie star in a slinky negligee drifting off to eternal sleep from an overdose of pills. But your picture omits a likely sickening reality: as she dies, her sphincter muscles relax, and that beautiful gown is soiled with her excrement.

Who will clean your blood off the carpet, or scrape your brains from the ceiling? Commercial cleaning crews may refuse that job—but *someone* has to do it. Who will have to cut you down from where you hanged yourself, or identify your bloated body after you've drowned? Your mother? Your wife? Your son?

The carefully worded "loving" suicide note is no help. Those who loved you will *never* completely recover. They'll feel regret, and an unending pain. And rage, because at that moment, you cared only about yourself.

Suicide is contagious. Look around at your family: sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, husband, wife. Look closely at the four-year-old playing with his cars on the rug. Kill yourself tonight, and he may do it ten years from now. It's a fact that suicide often follows suicide in families, and kids are especially vulnerable.

You do have other choices. There are people who can help you through this crisis. Call a hot line. Call a friend. Call your minister or priest. Call a doctor or hospital. Call the police.

They will tell you that there's hope. Maybe you'll find it in the mail tomorrow. Or in a phone call this weekend. Or when you meet someone shopping. You don't know—no one does. But what you're seeking could be just a minute, a day or a month away.

You say you don't want to be stopped? Still want to do it? Well, then, I may see you in the psychiatric ward later. And we'll work with whatever you have left.

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Country Flavor

In Granville Deitz's book, *Mountain Memories*, there's a chapter on disappearing mountain language. One dialect is described as "three parts sweet potato, one part magnolia, two parts coonskin and a sprinkling of Elizabethan moonshine English." A glossary of vanishing West Virginia-isms includes "ferninth," meaning across from or opposite; "antigodlin" or "sigodlin," for out of plumb or crooked; "tisic," an imaginary ailment; "dauncy," particular about food or dress; "swarp," to hit; and "hell's smidgin," a large number or quantity. There are some descriptive expressions—"going down the Western Slope," meaning growing old; "a 22-jeweled tomcat," for a fellow who's a devil with the ladies; and my favorite, "That old boy's so cross-eyed, he could stand in the middle of the week and see both Sundays."

—James Dent in Charleston, W. Va., *Gazette*

The greatest hero is he who makes his enemy his friend. —The Talmud