

Transcript for Episode 308: “Steve Nguyen: Losing Someone to Suicide”
Please note: This transcript has been lightly edited to remove filler words or sounds.

Possible tags

STEVE NGUYEN: You wake up. You realize that you're a survivor. You've reinvented yourself without even realizing. Going through this journey, you kind of learn to embrace this. And just make it as beautiful as it can possibly be. You live life to the fullest because you realize life is so short, right? And when you can finally feel that smile instead of forcing yourself to smile, you'll be able to look at those memories and be thankful that you had them in the first place. So you appreciate the simple things that life has to offer, and you don't take it for granted.

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LINDSAY KOLSCH: You're listening to the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast, a show about mental health and the things that make us human. Each episode we'll be talking about the things that can often feel hard to talk about, like depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. We'll be sharing stories and exploring big themes like hope, healing, and recovery.

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CHAD MOSES: 800,000 people die from suicide every year. Suicide claims more lives than war, murder, and natural disasters combined. We want to change these numbers. So in honor of World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10th, we're rallying supporters across the country and the globe to amplify a conversation about suicide prevention and to take action to reverse the growing rate of suicide. The goal of this year's campaign is simple: help people see that there is so much Worth Living For.

Leading up to World Suicide Prevention Day and National Suicide Prevention Week in the US, each week we'll be addressing a different perspective or way to look at the complex social and public health issue that is suicide. If you follow us on social media, you'll also be invited to join LIVE conversations with special guests. And on the campaign page, you'll find numerous ways to take action in your community, to share resources, and challenge the lie that says we can't talk about suicide. We hope you'll check it all out at WorthLivingFor.com. Again, that's WorthLivingFor.com.

Today on the podcast, we're grateful to be joined by Steve Nguyen. He's a Vietnamese-American director, actor, and artist. And there's a good chance you've seen some of his work on TWLOHA's social media or the blog over the course of the last three years. He's lent his voice and story often to help share a message of hope. As you'll hear, Steve's mental health journey includes depression, grief, and the loss of a loved one to suicide. We are so grateful that Steve is here to share his experience, honesty, and wisdom with us and all of you. Let's get started.

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CHAD: Steve, thank you so much for joining us today. It's an honor to finally have your voice. We've had much of your art on our platform and our website over the years, but it's just such a cool moment to be able to sit down with you and to put a voice to the sketches that we've been able to see. How are you doing?

STEVE: I'm good, Chad. Thank you for giving me the opportunities to express myself, use my art, borrow your platform, share all the wonderful thoughts and feelings that I've had over the last few years, and build on these opportunities that we've been working on. I'm grateful.

CHAD: For sure. I guess let's start here. For those of us that may not be as familiar with you and your work, give us a quick Webster's definition of what Steve Nguyen is.

STEVE: If I'm gonna live in the present, I would say right now I'm a writer, illustrator, animator. All of that was learned through years of experience, wanting to dive into this world of imagination, self-creation, and self-expression. Before, I was doing odd jobs. I was a production assistant at Universal. Then, when it was time to venture out and do my own thing, I just thought to go out there and see what it is I could bring to the table. Something unique, right? There's so many brilliant creators out there, and I felt like I had a chance to bring something new to the table. And it wasn't new, it was unique to me. So, that's pretty much how I describe myself now. I'm a student, always learning, always becoming something different. Just wanting to contribute to the bigger larger picture in life, whether it'd be to help people or contribute to a greater cause. That's what I'm all about.

CHAD: Man, I love that. I hope you know that kind of self-definition totally shines through with so much of your work. What I've been able to experience of your illustrations and your short pieces has been brimming with empathy. It's one thing that, obviously, To Write Love on Her Arms hopes to communicate. But I'm curious, how did you first get connected with us? How did you first learn about To Write Love on Her Arms?

STEVE: A friend of mine who was going through a really difficult time, kind of similar circumstances as me, she came across To Write Love on Her Arms. She passed this site along to me, along with the short story that Jamie wrote, and I read that. In some way, shape, or form, I wanted to get connected with you guys, but at the time I discovered it, I was not in the correct space, I guess, emotionally, mentally, to contribute anything. So take it back to a few years ago, 2018, I was going through a really rough time and the outlets that were there for me, they weren't there anymore. Generally, I like to connect with like-minded people, and just see if there's any chance that we can build something, right? Because we're all working towards the same goal. You guys were specifically receptive to a lot of the ideas that I wanted to push out, mainly just because a lot of people don't have an outlet, a lot of people don't have a voice, and a lot of people don't have a way to execute what they're trying to say. It's just all these thoughts

being bombarded, and there's not necessarily an outlet. But I felt like if I could use a unique creative platform and my own voice to put this all into perspective, maybe you could help someone who's going through a similar situation like me.

CHAD: If I could be so bold, that's kind of the arc that we hope that, virtually, every interaction we have takes. We love when people learn about us on social media, and we love when that plants a seed of "What if? What if I have something more to contribute? What if I can find a way to pay it forward? What if, down the road, we can do some further awesomeness?" So, officially we've been interacting for about three years now, but if I understood you, you learned about us like MySpace years ago? Is that correct?

STEVE: Yeah, it's been a long time. Like, what, 2006, I would say?

CHAD: That's right, man.

STEVE: Yeah it's been weird. I was in college around that time, so I grew up during the age where social media was kind of in its infancy. MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, all that stuff. I was on a deep dive for a lot of content. I was always tuned in. That's something I learned over the years. You never know who's tuning in, right? So a lot of people have questions they ask me, like how did you get so big or how did you get the following? It was just always being active and always paying attention to what got people inspired or what they see out there. People react instinctively to anything. In our daily lives, it's hard to filter out a lot of that stuff. So it was just good to tune in all the time, and pick the good and the bad and just roll with it.

CHAD: Yeah, I think what you just said there, rolling with all of it, the good, the bad, the in-between. The things that feel sacred, and the things that feel mundane. We're inviting people to be mindful for all of it. That it is all worth living for. That's obviously the rallying cry for for this campaign, for World Suicide Prevention Day. I know that you have joined us for the past three renditions of our World Suicide Prevention Day campaign and, man, we're just so thankful to have your voice and your work be a friend to us throughout those campaigns. Kind of holding that intention that this isn't just an idea, but this is something that is personal to you. You identified yourself as a survivor of suicide-loss. You spoke in the past about your significant other at the time who had died by suicide when you were just in college, perhaps when you were just learning about us. Could you talk a little bit about how that experience kind of shaped your desire to be a voice for hope and an advocate for change in the scope of mental health?

STEVE: Absolutely, I've given it time to reflect and dig deep and learn a lot about what I've been able to absorb from that experience. I don't think I've actually told anyone this, but also during the time when that happened, my friend also, tragically... Yeah. Yeah. And it's kind of hard to, yeah... I suffered two losses actually. Obviously, my ex was the most hard-hitting. But the fact of the matter is, this was a close friend who I went to high school with and later on college with. We did so much together. And these things just kind of happen out of the blue, you know?

Sorry, I'm kind of getting worked up. but just kind of reliving it. I was prepared to talk about this and then it just kind of hit. But it was tough.

And I'm sure this story is not a unique story to many people who are tuning in. A lot of people have gone through this with people much closer, obviously. I had time to think about it and just kind of reflect. And that's why I think I was able to convey this message through art, because I had time. Back in the day when it happened in 2006 or 2007, it was in my college years. I was about ready to graduate and stuff like that. These things hit you out of the blue and you don't really know how to get past it. It's a wall, right? You don't know how to fight through it. The worst part is hearing about it through somebody else. That somebody else was her roommate. She texted me and it was hard to believe. I couldn't necessarily process what was going on at the time. You would never expect something like that to happen to someone that close to you. All arguments, all that stuff that you had, all the bickering, all this stuff that made you miserable at the time, it just kind of amplifies and multiplies. You just hold this blame on yourself. Had that not happened, or had I had been a little easier on her, then maybe it wouldn't have happened that way. Maybe that was the case. At least that was what I was tackling with at the time. It was very emotional. It was really tough. They suggested that I seek counseling. There's not really a way to express yourself. You're holding all this weight on your shoulders, and it's not really healthy.

CHAD: So I think what you were saying there is actually pretty poignant. That it is one thing to say that this is not necessarily a unique story, and yet also kind of feel this weird tension. Like, "Okay, if it's not unique, then why is it so hard to describe?" Just to name the elephant in the room, Steve, if it was up to me, we wouldn't be having this conversation. I'd much rather be talking to you about art or about music or about things that, I guess, are easier to talk about. But, you know, that's stigma, right? Stigma suggests that there are safe things to talk about, and there are things that we ought not to talk about. So I just want to take a second to just applaud you for being a part of this conversation. Sharing our lived experiences, even though they're messy and confusing and take us down memory road, they have immense value for the non-uniqueness. For the other people that have walked down the same road last year, last decade, or maybe last week or last month. And talking about the anger, the confusion, the unresolved arguments. Obviously, now we're talking from a place of hope, that maybe we could change the stories of other people. But I don't reckon that hope took place overnight in your life, right? There probably wasn't a moment in your story where you said, "You know what? I'm going to make this have the best outcome as possible." Is there a way for you to track where hope began creeping up into this narrative?

STEVE: It's an ongoing thing to be honest. And there are triggers. Life never really goes as smoothly as we plan. Even now, just kind of experiencing... I just lost my grandfather, actually, two months ago. When you lose someone like that, all of the past memories of pain and loss kind of creep up on you, and you kind of have to go through this whirlwind again. You just realize that all you really have are memories of people. That's just the nature of the universe, right? We come together and we leave each other, we break apart, and then eventually we

come back together again. It's a beautiful thing, and it's a painful thing. But it's also just human. Hope is the thread that keeps you afloat. It's those every days that you have to wake up and... A friend of mine who I talk to a lot who just recently suffered the loss of a loved one also, she put it the best way I could describe it. When you go through something like this, it's the most bittersweet and unpleasant experience that anyone can go through. It's not brought up so much just because it's not common for anyone living their lives to undergo such tragedy. So the day that someone close to you passes away, a part of you kind of passes away, too. You're just left to figure out how to reinvent yourself and find a way to continue living your life with this large void. So hope is every day, that journey of continuing to fill that void and understanding that this is the process.

CHAD: I love that. Hope is finding a way to fill the void. Yeah, man. I'm gonna be wrestling with that one for a while. That's some beautiful words, man.

STEVE: Yeah, it didn't come from me. My friend, she's a very expressive person in her own way. Obviously she's going through a great deal of pain. And just like many others, that are tackling their struggles. Especially in this climate where we're just losing people, losing loved ones left and right. But we hold out hope, right? That's the thing about this whole conversation. It's because sometimes hope feels bleak, and we don't necessarily see the end or the goal we're trying to hit. Everything just feels kind of dark. Everyday living just becomes work, you know? I'm talking about the simple things like eating, showering, or just functioning. Those days become blurred. I guess the only people that can truly relate and empathize are, sadly, the ones that have gone through the same circumstances.

CHAD: I've remarked on that several times, more than several times, throughout the years of talking to people who have lost loved ones to suicide. One of the first things they do at the booth when they're talking to me is apologize. And I'm like, "No, it's okay. The reality is that grief kind of takes one to know one on how to deal with grief." That's almost especially true when it comes to grief in the wake of a suicide. I guess using that as a springboard, how has your understanding of grief changed over time? Maybe starting with losing Jen, your ex-girlfriend, and on through today. How has your understanding of grief evolved or changed?

STEVE: I guess I can put it into context and just say that it's extremely messy. It makes you feel like you're going crazy, and you can't really comprehend the thoughts that pop up in your head anymore. But deep down, you're making the conscious decision to fight. So unbeknownst to you, you're slowly embracing your new normal and you're making it as beautiful as possible. So one day you wake up and you realize that you're a survivor, right? It's the survivor in you that's telling you to live life to the fullest because, you know, we're slowly becoming aware that life is too short. Slowly, you're able to look at those memories you formed with that person and just be grateful for that time. A grateful heart forms within you as a result of undergoing such intense grief, because you appreciate the simplest things that life has to offer. You don't take anything for granted anymore. That's kind of my newfound perspective on it.

CHAD: Yeah, that's a valuable one for sure.

STEVE: It's really something that I've dwelled on and it made the most sense out of all the craziness that's happened.

CHAD: Yeah. And I think, so much of this, we're talking now 13 or 14 years removed from this intense loss, and the epiphanies aren't going to happen on day one or two, or even month one or month two. Just imagining that you had years of context, years of friendship, and you don't need to make amends with such an unfairness instantly. I think that, if anything, we would have an entirely different problem if we were able to transition immediately into hopefulness in the wake of a loss. But that wisdom that you've been sharing certainly comes in time. And that's not to say that you or I have it figured out now either. You mentioned when you were describing yourself, you're a learner. You're someone that's always looking for more to learn. Our hope is that there will always be more to learn from this, but thank you for sharing the lessons so far.

STEVE: It does come with time, obviously. We'd be having a completely different conversation if this happened like a week or two ago, right? It'd just be the reality of it. But yeah it's a lot of perspective and just came from a lot of insight from a lot of people. I just take what makes the most sense and just wrap it all into this tight little package that is what I want to deliver to you. I try to do that through my art. I feel like my voice is very similar to very many other people who have gone through similar circumstances that I have, but what differentiates me is the fact that I can execute it through a certain vision, right, a certain concept. And it's been a great collaboration with you guys over the past few years to kind of like, give me some sort of framework to put all that depression, all that anger, into something beautiful.

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LINDSAY: Hey podcast family, Lindsay Kolsch here. We wanted to invite you to be a part of the Worth Living For campaign over the next few weeks as we work to prevent suicide and remind people that there is so much worth living for. One way you can do this is through our World Suicide Prevention Day 2020 pack.

Each pack comes with an exclusive campaign T-shirt and instructions on how to get active in your community, both online and in-person. The pack also includes things like posters, stickers, and a set of postcards for you to personalize and send to those in your life who may need some encouragement or just a reminder that they matter. There are also some really awesome items you can add on including key tags, hats, and even some limited-edition custom TWLOHA x Skullcandy wireless earbuds.

And on World Suicide Prevention Day, which is September 10th, we'll be asking supporters to elevate conversations about suicide prevention by wearing their Worth Living For merch and using their voices to spread hope and help online.

You can purchase your WSPD pack today in the TWLOHA Online Store by going to store.twloha.com. And as a thank you for listening, we're giving our podcast family 20% off your pack plus a special free WSPD gift when you use the code PODCAST20 at checkout by August 31st. Thanks so much for helping us share this important, life-saving message.

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CHAD: I'd like to kind of transition this into the current campaign that we're in for World Suicide Prevention Day. One thing that we always make a point of highlighting throughout this campaign each and every year. Every year we point to some signs that may tell us if someone is struggling with suicide. Some of these signs include being withdrawn, sleeping too little or too much, maybe engaging with substance abuse. Self-isolating, giving away possessions. Are these things that you recognized with Jen or with your friends before they passed?

STEVE: Absolutely, yeah. Everything kind of encapsulated into all the things that you just listed were major signs that I didn't realize until obviously those events took place. I guess when they happen, naturally, you turn to blame. And it's more so, you put it on you. Because for me, I was probably one of the last people she interacted with. Those moments really do weigh on you and you really understand the gravity of your affect, your impact on their lives. But you don't necessarily live with them and you're not in their bodies 24/7, so you can't necessarily pinpoint when or where or what triggered anything in specific moments that may have caused anything major to happen. So I was just keen on signs, definitely. I always preface it by saying, we all go through the motions, right? And sometimes when you're in a long distance relationship with somebody, it's a shared pain. It's a shared pain of not being there and not being able to allow yourself that time with that person face to face. And, as much as you would want to, as much as you care about the person, you really want to be there for them, but you can't. And that's the whole thing, right? Being on social media, everyone's connected, but we're really not connected. We're all just kind of, we're all posting the best parts about ourselves and we're just trying to build the best avatars of ourselves. But in actuality, we've never been more disconnected than we have been. And I actually applaud a lot of people who post the negatives about their lives more than the positives. It's kind of hard to find authentic, real validation and feedback. No one wants to hear that, right? No one wants to hear the bad. We always see the great. And, unfortunately, that's really all the signs that you see from people. Until one day, "Oh, I didn't know that happened to that person." It just comes out of the blue. And I'm seeing that a lot nowadays because we don't know what's going on in their lives. But yeah, if you're close to somebody, you understand that on the surface is always pleasant. It's always great. They always look beautiful. They're always posting their vacation photos. But the closer you get to that person, you kind of see more of the void that they're trying to fill. And it's killing them slowly, trying to fill that. I don't think I was the person that was, I guess, suited to take on that responsibility at the time. Because I was going through my own journey and was just trying to succeed on my own terms. That's what most kids most college kids are doing right now. So, obviously, these are very different times now. But, in the times I was coming up, there weren't that many opportunities to thrive. So there was a small window for everyone to just get out and

do what it is. And people do succumb to the pressure of it. I'm sure Jen did. Privately, we always talked about how it affected her and her family. How all this unnecessary pressure that she built up, I guess, to put on herself, it always took a toll on her. But, publicly, no. She was great. She was happy. She was always pleasant. Everyone loved her, her friends. She never caused any problems. So it's really hard to pinpoint the signs from someone who's just that naturally, I guess, outgoing and friendly. It's just kind of buried underneath. You bury all the pain and the struggle and all that stuff underneath the friendliness. So, yeah, for those close to you, just always check in on them, see how they're doing. I make it one point to listen now, more so than talk. I think that's the one big takeaway you can do is just really listen to somebody. Because that could change their life and that can alter the course of many things just by being there. Just giving your time.

CHAD: And I think keying in on the context, the backdrop being college where you're surrounded by peers probably more so than any other time in your life. You're surrounded by people that are roughly in the same life stage as you, so it's really easy to make comparisons. That seeing how others succeed or maybe how others struggle around you, and you're just constantly aware of what everyone within this four year age gap is kind of navigating together. I remember back in my college experience struggling with mental health, and yet, while knowing resources and knowing signs and knowing, effectively, what mental health and what crisis looks like, but not knowing if it was, indeed, for me, if I was allowed to use the resources that I had been taught. Which sounds ridiculous now that I vocalize it. But I think if you were to again, go back to this college timeframe in your life. At that time, were you and Jen familiar with the idea of seeking professional mental health help? And if so, kind of what did that idea of treatment or support look like during these years?

STEVE: It never really crossed our minds just because I think the accessibility was completely limited. Look how far we've come, right? Now we stress it more than ever, and there's just so many apps and so many resources out there. So, in a different time, yeah, I would have totally sought it. As a college student, you're not only realizing that mental health resources 10 years ago, were not only scarce but expensive. We were just left to deal with our own problems to ourselves. I wish I had sought counseling or something back in the day. But it's a good lesson to learn now. Now that I have a daughter, I'm sure that she'll be going through the motions, dealing with her emotions too. And there's gonna be a lot of things that trigger her. It's different now. It's a different time now. We're more embracing to the fact that we are more in tune to mental health being a necessity and dealing with it because it's a very, very vital part of our well-being. Learning what I know now, yeah, I would have totally done what I could to get Jen, and especially me, the help that we needed.

CHAD: In the wake of Jen's passing, were you able to connect with a grief group or with a counselor? What were some of your lifelines to help you navigate the weeks and months and years that followed?

STEVE: So shortly after Jen's passing, my friend also passed. So it was about a four day span. And that's just when things kind of took a toll, and I wasn't able to really function. So yeah, I sought a counselor who dealt specifically with these types of incidents. To this day, we always communicate whenever there's something that comes up or if there's anything that I want to just briefly glance over just to play catch-up. She's been my go-to person. It was a move that needed to be made. I feel like a lot of proponents, especially in the Asian culture, don't necessarily deal with the mental health stigma as well as we could. In other parts of the country, they are way behind on this. And that's why you're seeing the rates of depression and other acts of self-harm go up. So like I said, I want to take every precaution, every measure or preventative measure to get better. That's just been my nature, I want to fix problems. I don't want to dwell on them. So when that happened, it was critical for me to seek the help that I needed and to do, not only for myself, but for my family around me. It's a journey, man. It never was really like one session or two sessions and it was all good. It was years. Years upon years. Still dealing with it to this day.

CHAD: For sure. And when you got connected with the counselor, was that your desire? Was that your idea? Did you have other friends that had sought counseling and said, "Hey, this could be a good idea." Or did someone bring you kicking and screaming into your first meeting?

STEVE: Oh, no, no, it wasn't like that at all. I just felt like if it's stunting progress, if it's stunting your ability to function, then, like anything, you go check it out, right? If your car doesn't work, you don't wait on it, you take it in immediately, right? You need it. It's a part of you that gets through the day. Your body is your vehicle, and all that, the heart and mind function as one. If one doesn't work, then the other can't function well, either. My mind was obviously in a tough place, and that caused a lot of issues. For me, at least, not taking good care of myself. And, yeah, it led to a lot of health issues down the line, too.

CHAD: So logic was in self-observation, it sounds like, were the tools there. I love that analogy. Look, if your car's broken down, that's why mechanics exist. If your heart hurts, if your mind hurts, then hey, there's mechanics for your heart and mind, as well. I'm just so thankful you had the wherewithal to know that you deserve to feel better than you did in that moment.

STEVE: And sadly, a lot of people don't come to that realization.

CHAD: Yeah, let's follow that. Let's pull that string a little bit. What would you say to someone who may be struggling with this grief in the wake of a suicide? What would you say to someone that is having trouble navigating that loss, or what it looks like to question if it's possible to feel normal again?

STEVE: So, let me put this in the best possible way I can. Nothing can bring back the person you lost, right? But having someone to live life to the fullest for is a beautiful thing. And it gives so much meaning to your life. So in going through this journey, life finds a way to reward you with the most beautiful things you never thought was ever possible. And you just have to allow

life to offer these things to you because you deserve it. In due time, you'll come to realize that you deserve to accept all the good things that happened to you from that moment forward. When you embrace the beauty that your new normal has to offer.

CHAD: Oh shit, dude, you get you got me tearing up.

STEVE: It's tough man. Like I said, it comes from years of dealing with all this. You're able to kind of like formulate your thoughts better and more coherently after going through this. So yeah, that's pretty much what I would have to say.

CHAD: So lastly, our statement this year for World Suicide Prevention Day is "Worth Living For." And it really encompasses our belief that, while life can be challenging and can be heartbreaking, there is still so much worth living for. Can you, in your own words, from your own perspective, maybe talk about what this statement means to you?

STEVE: Yeah, like I said, man, you wake up. You realize that you're a survivor. You've reinvented yourself without even realizing. Going through this journey, you kind of learn to embrace this. And just make it as beautiful as it can possibly be. You live life to the fullest because you realize life is so short, right? And when you can finally feel that smile instead of forcing yourself to smile, you'll be able to look at those memories and be thankful that you had them in the first place. So you appreciate the simple things that life has to offer, and you don't take it for granted. In doing so, trusting those who you love, if you believe in a higher power, whichever higher power it may be, life will reward you with the most beautiful things that you never thought you could ever imagine. Like for me, I would have never thought in my wildest dreams that I would have a daughter or I would be a published children's author. I never thought these things. I just decided, you know, this is it. This is it for me. There's so many beautiful things that you don't see, because the journey is not over. And like I said, everybody deserves to have these good things happen. They just come with time. It's all about timing, man. And the people that hold your hand and stand by your side through this journey, those are your family. Those are your loved ones.

CHAD: To, in some small way, reflect that back to you. I'd say it's worth living for the moments when searching on a MySpace page 14 years ago turns into a conversation that gives hope to untold thousands of people. Never in my wildest dreams would I imagine having the opportunity to speak to someone so about their journey, and we're just so thrilled to have you on board for one more go-around for World Suicide Prevention Day. We can't wait to see how this continues to impact lives. So, from the bottom of my heart, from the bottom of all the hearts of us over here at To Write Love on Her Arms, Steve. Thank you so so very much.

STEVE: I appreciate it, Chad. Thank you so much for having this conversation with me. It's an honor. As always, I don't take it for granted. And I love all you guys over there for what you do and what you bring to the table and the millions that you've been able to help get through these

tough times.

[music playing]

CHAD: A big thank you again to today's guest, Steve Nguyen, if you want to connect with him online, you can find him on Twitter and Instagram @stevenguyen—that's s t e v e n g u y e n. And again thank you to all of you for tuning in and for caring so passionately about this work. Our mission exists because of and for you.

We hope this conversation left you feeling informed, inspired, and encouraged. We'll be back next week with another episode where we'll discuss the challenges and barriers faced when trying to access professional help. In the meantime, if you are or someone you know is struggling, we invite you to use our [FIND HELP Tool](#) to locate free or reduced-cost resources in your area. And remember: You are worthy of hope. You are deserving of help. Please reach out. We're glad you're here.

[music playing]

LINDSAY: We hope this episode has been a reminder that your story is important, you matter, and you're not alone.

If you're struggling right now, know that it is okay to reach out and that there are people who want to help. Part of our mission is to connect people to the help they need and deserve. You can find local mental health resources on our website twloha.com. That's T-W-L-O-H-A.com. And Click FIND HELP at the top of the page.

Or, if you need to talk to someone right now, you can always text our friends at Crisis Text Line.

Simply text the word TWLOHA—that's T W L O H A—to 741741. And you'll be connected to a crisis counselor. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

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A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. The To Write Love on Her Arms podcast is produced by Lindsay Kolsch, with editorial support by Rebecca Ebert. Music assistance was provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor.

I'm Lindsay Kolsch, thank you so much for listening.

To Write Love on Her Arms is a non-profit movement dedicated to presenting hope and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. TWLOHA exists to encourage, inform, inspire, and also to invest directly into treatment and recovery.