

Transcript for Episode 415: "Suicide Prevention: Why Do You Stay Another Day?"
Please note: This transcript has been lightly edited to remove filler words or sounds.

CHAD MOSES: You're listening to the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast, a show about mental health and the things that make us human. I'm your host Chad Moses, and in 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. If any of the topics we discuss or the stories we share feel too heavy for you, know that it's OK to pause, restart, or to stop altogether. As we discover new stories, we hope to remind you that your story is important.

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CHAD: Over a year ago, when the pandemic altered nearly every part of daily life, we wondered what it would mean for those struggling, for those currently fighting to stay alive.

A mental health crisis already existed and the pandemic only made it more glaringly obvious. The collective trauma and loss nearly doubled the number of people having thoughts of suicide and experiencing depression compared to previous years. And in March of 2020, one in four young adults reported thinking about suicide because of the pandemic.

One bright spot, a moment of tragic optimism, is that this shared experience made talking about mental health almost a normal part of everyday life. We were surprised to see moments where the polite, "How are you?" wasn't expected to be met with an unassuming "fine."

In honor of TWLOHA's Another Day With You campaign and World Suicide Prevention Day—which is this Friday, September 10th, we've been using this space to have conversations that challenge the lie that says we can't or shouldn't talk about suicide. We want to share real-life experiences as they relate to suicide attempts, loss, and ideation.

For today's episode, instead of a one-on-one interview, we're doing something a little different. We've invited a wide array of voices to share some heartfelt responses to a couple questions: 1. Who or what has helped you stay another day? And 2. What would you say to someone who is finding it difficult to stay another day? Their responses are honest and unique, but there is often, and perhaps unsurprisingly, a common occurrence of hope. If some responses don't resonate with you, that's OK. Because our hope is that even just one message, one encouragement you hear today can inspire you or someone you care about to speak up, ask for help, or stay for another day.

With that in mind, I'm your host Chad Moses. We're so glad you're here.

[music playing]

KATRIKA LADWAL: Hi, this is Kartika from Mumbai. Something that has helped me stay another day is love. And love has taken so many forms in my life. The kindness of people who showed up for me when I couldn't show up for myself, the hope they held for me when I couldn't hold any, the strength they became for me when I couldn't carry myself. It is people because of whom I stayed another day. It is community because of whom I am here today. To someone who is struggling to stay another day, I want to say to you that I see you. I know what it feels like to feel unseen, to feel unloved, and unheld. I know what it feels like to not believe that tomorrow can look better. But I want you to know that you deserve to be loved. You deserve to feel seen. You deserve to feel held in all your pain and your sorrow. And that there is space in this world for your joy, and that joy will find you. That peace will find you. So please stay. Stay another day.

JOEL LEON: If there was one thing I could tell to someone who was thinking about suicide, and I don't know if this feels corny, but you're not alone. I think there are a lot of us who are walking this earth—they're probably right next to you on a bus, on a train, on a plane, in your cubicle, you might be looking at them on a zoom call—who's going through and processing the same level of emotion. And I don't know, sometimes that level of awareness, the idea that we're not alone in this suffering, can give us a sense of hope and even strength. And thinking about suicide doesn't make you any less human, doesn't make you any less, quote-unquote, "normal." I'd argue to say that there are a lot of us who have contemplated it at one point in time or another, you know? It's okay. Our thoughts are not ours.

SARAH WRIGHT: Hi, this is Sarah from Sacramento, California. Something that helps me to stay another day is friendship. Friends who I know are there for me no matter what, friends who have pulled me up out of the darkness more times than I can count. Friendships full of unconditional love. Friends who I can talk to about my deepest, most painful feelings without having to filter it, because I know that there's no judgement. There's so much power in knowing that you're not alone. And no matter what you're going through right now, or how things feel, you are not alone either. To someone who is struggling to stay another day, I would say don't give up hope. So often we think of hope as a feeling of positivity, or happiness, and when you're in pain, you just don't feel that way. Your pain is valid. Your situation is tough. So I like to think of hope as not a feeling at all. Instead, I like to think of it as a choice. A choice to see outside of the darkness that surrounds you. There's so much more to your life than what is happening and how you're feeling at this exact moment in time. There is light around the corner, even if you can't see it yet.

RACHEL KALLEM WHITMAN: Hi, I'm Rachel Kallem Whitman and I'm from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I live with bipolar disorder and I struggle with depression and suicidal thoughts. When I'm submerged in this darkness, it feels like I've always been depressed, and that I'll always be depressed, that I'll never get better. And that's when my suicidal thoughts take over. People have asked me before how I overcome my suicidal thoughts, and there's not really a simple answer, because depression is so complicated. But for me, one of the reasons that I stay another day is actually because of my pets. Of course, I love my family and friends. But when I'm in that pitch black, those dark moments, I remind myself that my pets rely on me, they really need me. I have three dogs and two cats, and I make a difference to them. I feed them, groom

them, walk them, play with them, comfort them, and they are my responsibility. I can't leave them. My pets give me—my pets give me purpose. If I met someone who was struggling with suicidal thoughts, I would tell them to think about their purpose. So I'm not talking about what's your life's purpose, but what's your everyday purpose, your daily purpose? Why do you have to get out of bed? Is it to make your kids breakfast, drop off your partner at work, work on an art project or finish a good book, walk three dogs? I'm not saying you should put on a happy face and hide your feelings. It's so important to talk about what you're going through and ask for help when you need it. But I think everyday purpose brings perspective. I woke up today and fed my pets and I know I need to do it tomorrow, that I will do it tomorrow, because they need me. You need to stay another day because you make a difference. You have a purpose. You matter. And the truth is you won't be in the darkness forever. You're somebody's light.

[music playing]

CHAD: Through September 11th, TWLOHA is working to raise \$250,000. That's a big number, but it translates to people receiving the professional mental health care they need and deserve. Most people who die by suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition. Our goal is to invest in treatment and recovery through providing scholarships for individuals and group counseling sessions and higher levels of care, and by connecting people to free- or reduced-cost services through our FIND HELP Tool. You can give a gift and help make all of this possible by donating at twloha.com/wspd right now. Thank you for caring. Thank you for believing in the importance of hope, help, and healing. We can't do any of this without you.

[music playing]

PHIL BALSOR: I'm Phil from Hamilton, Ontario. I stay another day because I know that it allows me the opportunity for things to get better. I stay because of books, movies, nature, good people, and for the hope that the world becomes a better place, even if that is unlikely. To anybody finding it difficult to stay, I would tell them that there's possibility in tomorrow. There's hope in another day and there's purpose in moving forward. If we leave, the possibility ends alongside hope. Staying here allows us to become something different than where we are right now.

ROSAMARIA SEVILLA: My name is Rosa, I'm from Mexico, and my family and my friends were the ones who always helped me to stay another day. They were always there to support me and listen to me, no matter how many times I used to make the same mistake or how many bad days I had. They are still the light that guides me through my darkest days. They gave me all their love when I was struggling and we didn't know how long it was going to take, but we knew for sure we were together and that was more than enough. I would tell someone who is struggling to stay another day that you should hold on to hope, because sooner or later, everything gets better and when the time comes, you will be grateful that you chose to stay another day.

JESS STRAIT: My name is Jess Strait and I'm from Wilmington, North Carolina. Someone who has helped me stay another day as my spouse and soulmate. Her unwavering love and support has helped me through years of battling mental illness. She stayed by my side during my darkest hours and always encouraged me to keep going. Because of her, we've been able to create the family of our dreams, and now we have three beautiful children who remind me every day why it's worth the fight. Something else that's helped me stay another day, especially during the tough times, is therapy. Therapy has not only helped me be a better partner and parent, but it's given me the confidence I need to persevere when I'm at my lowest. I've learned how to successfully cope with my mental illness and how to safely navigate through those moments when staying another day is so hard to do. To anyone who finds themselves struggling to stay another day, I would say first and foremost, I get it. Even though no one can completely understand your pain, it's 100% valid, and there is no shame in having those thoughts and feelings. I know firsthand how hard it is to believe or accept uplifting advice when you feel like your head is underwater. But thankfully, hope is more than just a word and a slogan. The most important thing I would tell someone who was contemplating staying another day is how many surprises your future holds. Staying another day gets you one step closer to joy, love, peace and fulfillment beyond what you can possibly imagine. Let choosing to stay another day be an exciting adventure of discovering the amazing moments life has in store for you. I know it may be hard to believe, but there will be a day not too far from now where you will be smiling and thinking to yourself, "Wow, I can't believe I almost missed this."

AUDREY BEAUDOIN: This is Audrey, I'm from New Hampshire. I have struggled in the past a lot with suicidal ideation and self-harm, but one of the things that has really helped keep me going on some of my hardest days is remembering to just take it one thing at a time, that all I have to do is the next right thing. Even if it means, you know, lying in bed in the morning and asking myself, OK, what is the next right thing for me to do? Get out of bed, OK. Now, what's the next right thing for me to do? Have a sip of water. And step by step, one thing at a time, it makes it possible to get through the day. And something that I would encourage someone who's struggling now is that there are so many moments that you don't even know you're going to experience yet that are worth holding on for. So even if you feel like right now there's not much that you want to stay for, know that there is still a whole future ahead of you that could be filled with experiences and people and things that will just change your life in the best way.

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CHAD: We want to give a shoutout to all of the wonderful folks who joined us today by lending their voices and stories. To Karti, Joel, Sarah, Rachel, Phil, Rosa, Jess, and Audrey: thank you. Thank you for sharing your story and perspective, and for dropping a bit of wisdom.

And to you, tuning in right now, we want to extend our deepest gratitude. You are the reasons behind so much of what we do, of what we hope for, and what we care about. You are integral to this movement and it's our honor to spend today and hopefully, another day, with you.

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

If you're struggling right now, know that it's OK 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](https://twloha.com). And click FIND HELP at the top of the page.

If you're in the U.S. or Canada and need to talk to someone right now, you can always text our friends at Crisis Text Line. Simply text the word TWLOHA—again, that's T W L O H A—to 741741. 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 Rebecca Ebert. Music assistance was provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor. And again, I'm Chad Moses. Thank you so much for listening. We're glad you're here.