**My Story - Anonymous**

Christmas 2001 was supposed to be the beginning of great things to come. A good year, lots to celebrate and be thankful for.  I had extremely high hopes for a close friend; he had been released from prison two months before Christmas.  He was home, sort of.

My friend had grown up in rough neighborhoods, endured years of maltreatment and most forms of abuse you could never imagine.  He was young Aboriginal man. He had been in and out of trouble with out local Tribal Police Department for years.  Every social service agency knew his family. Every social service agency I believe, without a doubt, wanted to help his family.  He fell through the cracks.  He came from a large family and being the oldest sibling, he tried his best to protect all of his younger siblings.  He was a very loyal friend. I was proud to be his friend; a close friend, nothing more, nothing less.

He didn't do so well in school, dropped out before he made it to high school and spent most days in our local juvenile detention center. He was the most street smart person I had ever crossed.   He spent a very short amount of time in the local child welfare systems, always managing to run away.  The more they looked for him, the more time invested in looking for him, the farther and faster he ran.

My friend fell into a lifestyle of gangs, fast money, drugs and alcohol at a very young age.  I don't recall a time I ever saw him drive, and wonder if he had ever learned to drive.  He was incarcerated for much of his young life and I really don't think he ever learned to drive a car.  We both had a unique fascination with old classic cars and restoration projects.

I his teenage years, my friend had numerous relatives and friends he could turn to as he ran from home to home, doing everything in his power to stay away from incarceration and the child welfare system.

As our friendship grew, I came to realize what great potential he had but during a night of heavy drinking, my friend made one of the biggest mistakes he would ever regret.  He broke into a home, attempting to rob a local small time drug dealer.  He attacked the homeowner and assaulted him.  It was a terrible assault, one that landed my friend in federal holding.  He eventually went on to be sentenced to a few years in a federal detention center.

I had a lot of hope and prayed often for my friend. I saw and knew a side I don't think anyone ever took the time to get to know. My friend could be so charming, so fun, so innocent, so child like. *A Lost Boy*.  My friend was a *Lost Boy* and I was determined to help him find himself, find his way, and become a productive member of our community.  What could be done to help him overcome his "Peter Pan" complex.

He was released from prison about a year and a half after going to prison.  I supported him in his efforts to abide by his paroled release.  He had two children but had separated from their mother prior to his release.  He loved his children dearly.  We talked about them all of the time. They were the one reason he felt he could turn his life around for. I ensured he saw his children as often as possible, making the 3 and a half hour drive to the corrections facility with his son, daughter, and girlfriend as well as my own children and husband.

He had not been released from prison for more than a month when landed himself back in the custody of Tribal Authorities.  Although extremely disappointed, I was determined to get him to listen.  He didn't have to learn the hard way.  He had a safe home to come to, and he had the emotional and financial support of my family and his.  His extremely impulsive behaviors had caught up to him once again.  He had been in the same Tribal Jail so many times, it was like a slumber party with old friends.  He even said so himself.

So when he did the unthinkable Christmas Eve, no one could have been more heartbroken than me. As so many have done before him, he hung himself in the Tribal Jail.  Christmas Eve, he had called my home a number of times. On that particular evening, I was in a disagreement with my husband, and he would not allow me to answer my friend's calls.  I knew my friend had been calling because he left numerous messages on my answering machine. I will never get the sounds of him calling over and over again out of my head. All to be told by my husband, "Haven't you done enough for him? You care more about him that you do me.”

Initially all I could do was blame myself; for the crumbled marriage and later, my friend's suicide; but my mind ran wild with thoughts of my friend's suicide. There were so many unanswered questions, such as, how could he do this to his children? How could he do this to his family?  What did I miss? What did I fail to say? Why didn't I notice a change in his compassionate efforts to change his life for the better? Was the pressure to be a productive member of our community so much, he had no other choice?  Why?

In time, through lots of prayer, a lot of talking circles, and my own mission to learn as much I could about suicide, I have finally come to some conclusions.  My friend's death is not understood and may never be understood. As time passes, it does not heal my wounds. I have only learned to live with my loss.  I see his children from time to time. I cannot help but wonder if my friend considered the impact his suicide would have on any of us; those left behind. I wish he had known his suicide would increase the chance that someday; his children's chance of suicide is quite imminent. I gave him my heart; he shattered it to pieces.  I will never be the same. I will never love the same. Who knew a love so strong could hurt be so painful.

I spend hours upon hours sharing insight, wearing my heart on my sleeve.  It is not a badge of honor. I think of it as.... a shattered piece of glass. Every once in a while, I find the courage to mend my shattered heart by attending the annual suicide world awareness day at a grief center, actively participating in suicide prevention, hoping to one day, initiate suicide prevention chapters across Indian Country. I want to keep the conversations alive. I used to think conversations about suicide would only enhance one's ideation or attempt.   I now know better.  In hindsight, my friend never discussed suicide, implied any form of suicidal ideation with me. After his death, a number of his friends and family members told me he had attempted suicide numerous times starting in his teenage years. I realize now that I didn't know him so well after all.

I now think about how his reckless behavior was an obvious sign of *hopelessness*.  I know now, the love and friendship we shared was priceless while it lasted. I no longer blame myself for placing so much demand on our friendship.

I hope he's proud of the challenges I have overcome and the career path I have chosen. I work in the mental health field, crisis response to suicide and traumatic events where others may need my empathetic support. Someday, I hope to provide hope and to make a difference in the life of my people. One day suicide will not be considered an option, it will be prevented. We all endure hardships, challenges, trials and tribulations, but through faith in a higher power, the love and support of friends, family, mental health, and other social service agencies, I hope all people will consider that the choice is life, not death.

Author: I am Native American, I am Someone's Daughter, Sister, Mother, & Friend

Taken from save.org

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Case Study**

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| **Fill in the graphic organizer and answer the questions below based on the case study provided. (25 marks)** |

**Does talking about suicide increase a person’s thoughts or attempts of suicide? Why or why not? (2)**

**Support & Help (3)**

**Risk Factors (7)**

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| **Physical, Emotional & Behavioral Signs (3)** |

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| **How has the suicide affected the friend writing this story? (2)**  **(may be negative, career changes, etc.)** |
| **What methods of healing is the friend using? (3)**  **-**  **-**  **-** |
| **The friend needs support during this hard time.**  **Provide one website that would be beneficial for the friend in order for her to learn about suicide. Remember what you learnt about choosing quality websites! (2)**  **Name of website:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  **Web Address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |
| **Was the man at a greater risk for suicide because he was Aboriginal? Why or why not? (3)** |