**Chester Bennington’s Death — Suicide Is Not Selfish**

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I read the headline with shock and disbelief: dead? Chester Bennington — the lead singer of Linkin Park —was dead? He couldn’t be. I mean, he is (well, he was) the voice of my childhood.

It was Linkin Park and Bennington which carried me through the long, angst-ridden days of adolescence, and the lonely, anxiety-ridden nights.

But TMZ was [**reporting**](http://www.tmz.com/2017/07/20/linkin-park-singer-chester-bennington-dead-commits-suicide/) it. *Rolling Stone* was [**reporting**](http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/chester-bennington-linkin-park-singer-dead-at-41-w493387), and at the time of this writing, *E!*, the AP, and BBC have all reported it.

However, it was the cause of his death which hurt most. It was the cause of his death which pained me most, and it was said cause which caused my heart to skip a beat — much like *Hybrid Theory* and my old, double-AA powered Discman. Because Bennington, a husband and father of 6, died by suicide.

[**According to TMZ**](http://www.tmz.com/2017/07/20/linkin-park-singer-chester-bennington-dead-commits-suicide/), he hanged himself.

Make no mistake: The semantics are unimportant — seriously, the how and why is *beyond*unimportant — because all death is tragic. It doesn’t matter if the victim is young or old, sick or in good health; all death is too sudden. All death comes too damn soon. But the ache I felt when I read about Bennington was deep. It was complex, and it was familiar.

It was “I could’ve ended up like Bennington” sort of familiar.

So it didn’t help when my Facebook feed began filling with ignorant comments, things like “suicide is weak, “suicide is selfish,” “I’m sorry but when you have 6 kids you stick it out for them,” and “these men; WTF is wrong with these men?” Because the question isn’t what is wrong with “these men” — or on the flip-side, what is wrong with “these women” (the ones which try and/or die by suicide) — the question is what is wrong with us?

What is wrong with how we are talking about (and stigmatizing) suicide?

You see, [**suicide is one of the leading the causes of death**](http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2016/suicide-replaces-homicide-second-leading-cause-death-among-us-teens.aspx) in America. In fact, it is the second leading cause of death for those 44 years old or younger, and while there is never a single cause for suicide — while [**according**](https://afsp.org/statement-american-foundation-suicide-prevention-chester-bennington/) to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, “Suicide is the result of many factors that come together, such as an underlying mental health condition and access to lethal means — we must do more to prevent such tragic deaths through greater awareness of mental health issues, common risks and warning signs, and effective interventions and treatments.”

And one of those things involves talking about suicide. Openly, honestly, and without shame or stigma.

So let’s talk about “it.” Let’s talk about me: a two-time suicide attempt survivor. Because yes, I tried to kill myself.

Twice.

[**I made an intentional decision to take my life.**](http://www.scarymommy.com/life-after-suicide-attempt/)

Twice.

But I didn’t do so because I was “weak.” I didn’t so because I was “selfish,” and I didn’t do so because I wanted to hurt my loved ones, my family, or my friends. I did so because I was broken. Because I was desperate and hurting and because I was sure there was no other way out.

Of course, I know how confusing that sounds. I know how ridiculous and “crazy” that sounds — obviously there is help, there is hope, there is something more — but unless you have been there, unless you have struggled with addiction or alcoholism, a chronic illness, a mental illness, or something else, you can’t “get it.”

You can’t possibly understand, but that doesn’t mean you cannot help.

That doesn’t mean your input and your voice cannot shift this collective conversation, because where there is silence, there is guilt. Where there is silence, there is shame. Where there is silence, there is “scandal” and  secrecy, and where there is silence, there is stigma.

Make no mistake: I am not special. I am not here because I asked for help, or got help. I am not here because someone “saved me” or because I saved myself. I didn’t. (In fact, even now — 17 years later — I still struggle with suicidal ideation. There are days when I question my worth, my value, and my life.) Instead, I am here because of fate. I am here cause of luck. I am here because my attempts failed.

Because I “woke up alive.”

But every 12.3 minutes one person in America isn’t so lucky. Every 12.3 minutes, one person, like Bennington, loses their life and we need to do more to support others. We need to do more to help others, and we need to prevent suicide whenever possible: by reaching out. By speaking up. [**By talking about suicide.**](http://www.scarymommy.com/why-i-talk-to-my-kids-about-suicide-2/)

By saying the word S-U-I-C-I-D-E.

So while I hate that yet another death — Bennington’s death — is the catalyst for this conversation, please think before you type. Think before you speak. Think before you judge, and know that if you are struggling, you are not hopeless. You are not worthless, and you (and your life) has value.

In more ways than you know.

*If you, or someone you know, is having suicidal thoughts, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or text “START” to 741-741.*