

bullycide

IN AMERICA



Moms speak out about
the bullying/suicide connection

COMPILED BY BRENDA HIGH



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An Excerpt from “Hard Lessons”

What It Feels Like – The Pain of Depression

By April’s Mom, Summer Clinton, Edited and Compiled by Brenda High

*The entire “Bullycide in America” book can be ordered on Amazon or by
going to www.Bullycide.org.*

Part V
What It Feels Like
The Pain of Depression



“Bullies WILL cause depression and depression is the number one cause of suicide. The signs are there – be aware!”

In loving memory of
April Himes
4/27/86 – 2/14/00
By Summer Clinton

I would like to put an end to a myth. I have heard that suicide is a very selfish act and that those who die by suicide are only thinking about themselves. This is so far from the truth. A person that takes his/her life by suicide is not thinking of themselves, or anyone else. A depressed and suicidal person is not *thinking* - the brain is not functioning well enough to have any rational thoughts. There are only feelings. It's all about emotions. You *feel* sad, upset, unloved, despair, hopeless, helpless, alone, gloomy, weighted down and rejected. These are just a few of the *feelings*.

What is Depression in the medical sense?

Depression is a very serious medical condition. It is a mood disorder. Don't confuse it with life's ups and downs. Life is stressful. Your boyfriend or girlfriend just dumped you or you got your first speeding ticket or even lost your job. You find a way to cope with the stressors in your life and then move on. The problem is when you can't cope with these stressors. The sadness, hopelessness and helplessness...when they last over a period of two weeks or more, then depression can creep into our lives. I think of it as a spider web that weaves itself in and around the brain. The illness changes your moods and the way you think. You can't concentrate or make intelligent decisions about everyday issues. Your feelings are negative and distorted. Depression takes root in work, school, family, social time, appetite, sleep, and in favorite activities.

Who gets Depression?

The answer is...anyone. It can affect all ages, genders, income levels and faiths. Some depression may have genetic roots, but beyond that, we're a long way off from being able to tell who might be at risk.

What causes Depression?

Depression can come from many sources. It could be hereditary, a chemical imbalance, fluctuating hormones, or a stressful event or events in your life (a "trigger"). The event could be a breakup, a conflict within your family, death of a family member or friend, a car

accident, the loss of a pet, or as in April's case, by peers bullying her at school. When someone is clinically depressed, the sadness lingers on and on, and it becomes debilitating.

What are the symptoms of Depression?

A person with Depression may only have two or three symptoms...or ten. You may suffer from Depression if you:

- Sleep all day or not to sleep at all
- Eat significantly more or less, gain or lose significant weight
- Have debilitating headaches
- Are restless, irritable, agitated
- Are Fatigued
- Have feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and despair
- Find it hard to concentrate and make decisions
- Are feeling unworthy or guilty
- Cry all the time...seemingly about *nothing*
- Have a lot of anger
- Are talking about or thinking about suicide

What does it feel like to be Depressed?

As one who has lived with depression, think of all the emotions and feelings mentioned above and then think about feeling these all at the same time and multiplies infinitely. These are the darkest and

heaviest moments of your life. Your emotional feelings become physical. By that, I mean my soul was feeling tortured. It hurt so bad I couldn't breathe. It felt like my soul was being stretched and squeezed out of my body. There is no stopping it. It is bigger than life itself. You cannot control it. It controls you. That moment of time seems to last forever. When I'm depressed, I am so engulfed in these moments of feelings that I seem to fall in a dark and eerie hole. I know, I believe, there is no way out because of all those negative feelings.

What's real and what's not real?

When I am depressed, there were times that I feel like I am becoming part of a bottomless hole, but then sometimes, by the Grace of God, the phone will ring. It takes a moment to return to reality. My best friend calls. I have no idea what we talk about or how long but when I get off the phone I would notice that there were two bottles of pills in my lap. I don't know why I picked up those pills or when I had gotten up to go get them. Again, lucid, clear thoughts are hard to come by in these moments...While writing April's story for this book I actually had one of these episodes.

I have bi-polar illness. This is when a person has extreme lows and extreme highs. I only have highs maybe twice a year. The rest of the time I'm fighting depression. At times, my life is like a rollercoaster.

Up and down. I take medicine to help me find balance; A middle ground.

Before she died, April was diagnosed with Depression. She was taking an antidepressant to battle it. I would ask her all the time if she felt it was helping. She always said “no”. Would another medicine have worked? Who knows? I personally do not think anyone under the age of 18 should be put on antidepressants, but I am not blaming the antidepressant for April's death. The bullies triggered April's depression. And depression led to her suicide. I know the antidepressant did not help her. But if it did hurt her, I'm convinced it was only a minute problem. I compare it to one drop of water in a half filled bathtub.

What are the Warning Signs of Depression?

- Making suicidal statements
- Giving away belongings
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Failing grades
- Doing less of what used to give them pleasure
- Becoming emotionally or physically upset for no reason
- Hostility
- Preoccupation with death

Can Depression be treated?

Yes. A doctor can diagnose Depression. Several things can happen. The doctor may prescribe medication, likely, an antidepressant. Children on antidepressants should be closely monitored. Experts disagree on the safety of such medications for younger people. There are a variety of different antidepressant drugs, and one may provide better relief for a patient than others. Medical treatments for depression should be carefully considered and discussed with a doctor. These mean that regular visits to the doctor should be made to follow-up and possibly “tweak” the medication to fit the individual needs of the child. Don't leave everything up to the doctor. You must take control of the situation and take action. You must observe your child and then talk with the doctor.

Ongoing therapy and counseling is another great source of aid for people with depression. In addition, a support network of friends and families is a vital part of treating chronic depression. Isolation and withdrawal are common symptoms of depression. Please consult the resources in the end of this book for more solutions to chronic depression.

My final words... **Don't give up hope.** Depression can be treated!

About the Authors



Brenda High

www.bullycide.org/brenda.html

On September 29, 1998, when her son Jared took his life, Brenda's life changed forever. As a result, Brenda testified to the Washington State House Education Committee on the subject of bullying, pushing for passage of an anti bullying law. It was signed into law in March 2002. Soon after, Brenda founded Bully Police USA, which reports on State Anti Bullying Laws and advocates for children who are bullied in school.

Brenda is the webmaster of www.JaredStory.com, www.BullyPolice.org and www.Bullycide.org. She has consulted with media, television and lawmakers as well as telling Jared's story to educators, students and parents – she is “A Mom on a Mission” to stop school bullying.



Summer Clinton

Carol went on her local television exactly five years after her daughter's suicide. She wanted to remind everyone not to forget April and why she died. She also appeared on The Montel Show.

Carol's life is her family. She enjoys being a grandma and spending time with her grandchildren and her children. Because of her bi-polar disorder and the trauma of losing April, Carol is on disability. She enjoys her “therapy” dog, as well has her lop-eared rabbit and her Amazon bird. Carol finds time to enjoy one-stroke painting, movies, fishing and camping. She also calls herself a “prankster” and says, everyone is her target – she loves a good joke and laughter – it keeps the depression at bay.

The flag on this back cover was made by the children of Woodlawn Christian School in Prince George, VA. The children made a paper quilt after being told by Miss Virginia, **Adrianna Sgarlata**, some of the stories of Bullycide. Their slogan - "These little hands will Never hurt another Child" was printed among the hand prints of each child.



"Much more than a mere exposé of horrifying statistics, this book is a collection of personal letters to you, straight from a broken heart, about the most devastating case of bullycide ever... the one that claimed the writer's own child. I applaud every author in these pages who has struggled in the depths of grief to tell the most painful story of their life, and I challenge America to respond to their tear-stained pages."

—Author and journalist Neil Marr (who coined the word 'bullycide' in *Bullycide: Death at Playtime*, co-authored by the late Tim Field).

"Bullycide in America provides striking examples of what can happen when some of the most bully-sensitive and aware members of our society, our children, are not protected by adults in our social, legal, and school systems. These courageous stories validate many other parents' stories and motivate all of us to get real and take action against all forms of bullying." —Tami McCandlish, author of *Flying Grounded: My Spiritual Triumph Over Female Bullying* and founder of The Triumph Organization

"Wow what a real eye opener! Every parent and teacher needs to read this book to understand how bullying effects everyone involved, and how important it is to take action on bullying reports." —Jim Jordan, President of Report Bullying, www.reportbullying.com

