

Chronicles of September  
(Is Suicide Ever The Answer?)

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Today, September 11th, 2019, here at USP Tucson, an inmate attempted to commit suicide in my dorm, B2. This morning, as I was coming back from breakfast, several officers rushed to my dorm, and later took an inmate out on a gurney. Later, we learned that he attempted suicide, but wasn't clear by what nature; some said he cut himself, others said he swallowed something, others said he attempted to hang himself.

This isn't the first time this has happened here, and I might suppose it has happened numerous times in prisons all across the country. But, as I compose this, I might imagine that many of you who are not that familiar with how prison works, or what inmates go through, might not care as much about the plight of an inmate.

I can kinda understand a bit about it, because there is the assumption that whatever happens to an inmate, he probably deserves. But why is that? Why do we think that way? I think partly because there is a natural belief that if a person is in prison, they must be guilty.

And in part, that is true; the person WAS convicted of a crime. But this does not mean that they were guilty. Numerous times have people been charged with a crime, and had poor legal representation, or biased opinions, and found guilty. So it makes sense that you'd think that every inmate deserves what he or she gets...

But what if they're not guilty? And even if they were... who are YOU to judge?

So, a guy attempted suicide, why would a person do something like that, and for those in prison, could it be reasonable that maybe suicide is the best answer? And while every person would likely say that suicide is NEVER the answer, and to the most part, I agree, let me argue the counter; from this side of the wall.

What if your situation was so dire, that to live another day would be only a continuation of torture? Is life worth living if you are in a nightmare every minute of the day? Often times in prison, the weak are preyed on by the strong. Rape is very common, and often younger inmates are victim to others. This isn't always the case to be sure, but it happens enough. Supposedly, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has a "Zero Tolerance" policy on sexual assaults...

Pardon me while I laugh...

What I have seen is that for the most part, prisons could care less what happens to an inmate, they are only about damage control, to make it appear that they are doing their job. In truth, prisons rarely take any real initiative to address sexual assault, only after it has happened, and usually to sweep it under the rug, so that it's not their visible problem. So if, for example, an inmate is raped, the prison will conduct an "investigation", while shipping the inmate far away from the place where it occurred, so that they cannot sue the prison for negligence.

Now, what if this is what happened to the victim today? I point this out, because that may well be the case. I overheard some say that the person may have been a victim of rape, and maybe attempted to commit suicide.

Is this justifiable? In this case, was the attempted suicide the answer? We

cannot fully appreciate the gravity of the situation, because we don't know what this person has gone through. It then would be unfair to close our ears to what that person was going through. We could still argue that to try to kill yourself is not the answer, but unless you have gone through this, it is too easy to simply give the wholesome answer.

So, let's consider that in such events like this, it IS conceivable that the best answer would appear to be to end it all...I'm not agreeing in full with that, I'm just saying that I can see why a person would consider that.

What then, if a person is terminally ill, and in prison... this is also a situation where the end result was an inmate DID commit suicide.

This happened about a year ago, about 2018, when an elderly man with Cerebral Palsy, took his life in another dorm. From what we know, he was sent back to USP Tucson because the other prison he went to would not give him any medication to help with his issues. Once here, he was told the same thing. It then is likely that the man considered that with too much time left in his sentence, and his body getting worse, and the prison doing less than the minimum to take care of him, he was looking at a torturing time in prison, with no one to care for him.

I ask you, what was he supposed to do?

I can fully understand that a person suffering does not wish to suffer until he dies. I think this is a clear case of cruel and unusual punishment, to prevent a man from getting decent and reasonable medical attention, to prolong his life to live it as comfortably as possible. Even in prison, a man has to be treated like a man, in nothing less than human compassion for one another.

When this was ignored, you leave a man less than a human being, and forcing him to live like less than a human being. No person deserves that, especially when the prison has an obligation to not house human beings, but to also take reasonable steps to care for the human being.

But in such a situation, was it reasonable for such a person, in that situation, to take his life? If you were in that same situation, what would you have done? What COULD you have done, and if you did, and met failure at every turn, what then?

Was suicide the best solution? If not, what was?

We all know the answer of humanity: suicide is NEVER the answer, but those answers come from those who likely have never been put to such an extreme situation. I personally believe that there is ALWAYS a way, if we never give up, but I can sympathize with those who see nothing but darkness. How can you see light if every day is midnight? Where is the light at the bottom of the sea? Who brings a candle to your aid if everyone convicts you?

What do you do when there is no hope? It's not an easy question, and I share this with compassion for those in these situations. The best thing I can offer is this: if there is a Loving God (and there is), then there is always a better way. When such times come, maybe it helps to remember this scripture from Jeremiah:

"For I know the thoughts I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not evil, to bring you a future and a hope".

Guys, NEVER give up. If you have faith in God, then suicide is NEVER the answer. Give God a chance to help you out of the darkest night. He is, after all, The Light.