

COMMENTARY

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Reality of suicide demands support; help exists at UO

Guest commentary

We are saddened at the loss of two University students who committed suicide this year. Though we do not know the details of these particular student's lives, we want to provide some information with the potential to help others.

Suicide is, unfortunately, a prevalent problem in the United States. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide was the 11th leading cause of death in the year 2000, and was the eighth leading cause of death for males. For young people ages 15-24, it is the third leading cause of death.

Although some people who commit suicide give signals before the event, such as prior attempts, making a will, saying goodbye or giving away treasured possessions, many do not exhibit such obvious signs. Depression is both highly prevalent and highly treatable; unfortunately, many people are reluctant to seek treatment or to talk about feelings of depression.

When people are depressed, they often feel hopeless and think their problems are insurmountable and that nothing will change how they feel. You can help a friend see that hopelessness is the depression talking; that in fact there are many steps that do indeed help.

Another common thought among suicidal people is that they are a burden on their friends and family — their condition distorts their perception. But while people who are depressed may think that others would be "better off without me," in fact, the legacy of suicide is a far greater burden on their loved ones than is their depression.

It is always better to ask someone if you suspect they may be considering harming themselves, and then to take steps to ensure their safety. This usually involves disclosing their suicidality to family or friends or a mental health professional. Ideally, this occurs with their consent; however, even if a friend entrusts you with such a secret, this trust must often be betrayed. The logic is, "Better a mad friend than a dead friend."

Those who have lost friends or family members to suicide often experience a range of emotions that can encompass grief, anger, confusion, loss and depression. They may benefit from mental health services. If you suffer from feelings of depressed mood or thoughts of suicide, or if you need help coping with the depression or the suicide of someone close to you, please contact help.

The University Counseling Center is open this summer: Its number is 346-3227 and it is open from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For emergencies, call Whitebird at 687-4000 or the emergency room at Sacred Heart Hospital at 686-6931.

Rachel Goldsmith and Anne Simons work at the University's Psychology Clinic.

Tell us what you think of us!

The Emerald is currently conducting a readership survey to determine who reads the paper, what parts they read, what they like and don't like, and what their spending habits are.

We want your input on improving the paper, and we want to know where you shop so we can provide the best advertising possible.

We've put together an online survey, conducted by Pulse Research, Inc., a nationally respected, independent newspaper research firm in Portland. Every part of the Emerald — the news, classified advertising, display advertising, production and circulation departments — will use the information gleaned from the survey to do its job better.

To show our gratitude for completing the survey, we are offering a \$100 cash prize, a \$50 cash prize and a \$25 Campus Cash prize. Winners will be selected from everyone who completes the survey.

So what are you waiting for? Go to the nearest computer, point the browser at www.pulseresearch.com/dailyemerald and take the survey! It's secure, private and takes about 10 to 15 minutes. Plus, you could win cash money!

Philanthropy — happily ever after

Gather 'round, kiddies, Auntie Jessie has a graduation-time story for you.

Remember Cinderella, that favorite female of fairytales who was fond of the grunge look and committed to her life of drudgery until circumstances changed, and she went from being a nobody to being a somebody, complete with tiara?

As it turns out, hers is an allegory for the plight of the lowly undergraduate — yes, even you guys out there ought to be able to relate.

For years now, you've slaved under the thumb of professors, administrators and GTFs. You've given into their unreasonable demands on your time, validated their outrageous beliefs about what constitutes a sensible workload and cultivated friends among the animals that live in the frat houses.

Now, it is almost time to go to the ball. For you, there are no glass slippers, but you do get an equally impractical, you'll-only-wear-it-once outfit of your very own.

So, what happens after your ball? There may well be a prince or princess charming waiting in the wings to sweep you off to Never-Never Land, but regardless, it is highly likely your economic circumstances will change for the better.

And that will encourage another fairytale personage, the Wolf — both the Big-Bad and the one in sheep's clothing — to show up at your door attempting to solicit you.

For you see, as soon as you go from microwaved Ramen noodles and generic mac and cheese to eating food you like, even when it isn't on sale, the word on the street goes out (via alumni mailing lists), and the requests for money start rolling in.

(It is a little-known fact that after the wedding, Cinderella's fairy godmother presented her with charming little requests, complete with envelopes, that guilted dear Cindy into sharing her good fortune with other deserving-but-down-trodden chambermaids.)

So, how do you handle these importuning beasts? Axes are passé; woodsmen aren't that easy to find since the timber industry crashed; and there's never a well around when you need one. The advice from Auntie Jessie is simple: Give 'em what they want... well, mostly.

When it comes to alumni giving, you will be led to believe that you have several wonderful options. For example, there is the athletic fund — you can encourage talented students to take pride in being labeled waterfowl for life. You could also give to the general scholarship fund and enable bright students to study without having to worry about how to keep the cupboards full of noodle products.

There is, however, a real flaw with this solution. You see, once it's discovered that



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you're a pushover, you just find more wolves at the door. So, here's what you do:

Go ahead and endow an athletic scholarship...

...for the athletically challenged. After all, if ever there was an underfunded group, it has to be those folks who — when faced with the approach of a spherical object — end up with broken noses, broken bodies or broken windows.

Or, on the same principle, you could endow an academic scholarship...

...for the academically challenged. Of course, there always seem to be a lot of those folks running around a college campus, so maybe that wouldn't be a deterrence.

To push these wolves off, you need to get creative.

How about explaining that you're happy to give, so long as your money goes to fund lower trees and softer turf for the geriatric squirrel population on campus?

Or, what how about a sidewalk defense

fund? Explain that you're concerned about the possible erosive effects of chalk on cement.

Still not convinced? If you really want to drive the wolves away in droves, offer to use some of your newfound fiscal solvency to empower future undergrads...

...and sponsor a tenured faculty impeachment fund. Never again will you have to say, "Please take me off your calling list." When word gets out, the underground academic conspiracy will blacklist you so fast, even the carpet cleaners and photograph schedulers will keep their distance.

So, my dear Cinderellas and Cinderellas, as you head off into your happily-ever-afters, remember Auntie Jessie's graduation-time story and give until it hurts...

...until it hurts the ones who asked you for money, that is.

Contact the columnist at jessicolehodgkinson@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Letter to the editor

ASUO should address campus diversity

As the new ASUO officials take office, I would like to offer a suggestion: Can we please get serious and work on diversity issues here? More specifically, why is there so much damn diversity here?

This place has got way too many different ethnic and racial groups for me to assert my rightful role as a heterosexual white male. I can't tell you how many classes I have had here where I have to share my air with women, blacks, Asians and dear god, gays!

My understanding has always been that college is supposed to be about making me feel safe and comfortable without having to think that there are different, and therefore obviously inferior, people out there. Sadly, I feel that the University has failed me miserably up to now.

Therefore I call upon the ASUO — most of you are straight and white, I think — to halt this oncoming freight train of diversity that threatens to run roughshod over my otherwise gloriously homogeneous University.

Some options I would suggest would be segregated classes, deportations or just outright banning of students dif-

ferent from me based solely on my discretion. I fear that if we do not act soon, we may be forced to interact with these groups rather than fall back on our time-tested and scientifically proven stereotypes about each other. Certainly nobody here wants to envision such a nightmare scenario playing out.

So let us then not waste any time in eradicating the scourge of diversity from our campus by whatever means necessary. The details are unimportant, so long as I can once again feel like I belong and they don't.

James Squires
 Eugene