

# SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

Comedian addresses dark subject matter in one-man show

**C**ollin Williams doesn't want to be known as the suicide comic. "Suicide doesn't define you," Williams says. "It's something I needed to talk about. If I become the suicide comic, that's what I'm defined by."

That's where he sees the contradiction.

For now, Williams is touring behind his critically acclaimed half-stand-up/half-one-man show *My Suicide Note*. In it Williams weaves his own suicide note into storytelling and comedy that's cathartic and very, very dark.

In September, Williams gave a TEDx talk in his hometown of Salt Lake City on the value of processing trauma through humor. Williams himself has attempted



suicide and been in mental health treatment for years. "I'm on my 28th or 29th medication," he says.

For Williams, stand-up has helped. "Different people express their emotional trauma in different ways," he says. "Humor isn't the fix for everyone. You don't need it to replace your medication. Humor is the first way you can feel comfortable talking about issues."

Collins continues: "People don't talk about emotions or feelings very much," particularly in Utah.

*My Suicide Note* is deeply personal, and not for everyone. Williams wants to be clear about that from the start. He respects comedians like Christopher Titus and Mike Birbiglia — stand-ups known for "wonderful, honest storytelling," he says. "Comedy that means something."

His show features an overarching narrative, Williams continues, adding that, "I don't have sets. I don't have props."

Mostly, he hopes his show helps those struggling with personal trauma, depression and suicidal ideation feel less alone.

"I'm not a mental health expert," he says. "I'm a comedian who deals with mental health."

It's important not to judge those who open up about issues with suicide, Williams explains.

"Making sure they understand we all have bad days," he goes on. "I'm trying to reclaim it. I've been there where you're at right now. I'm still here. I'm on the other side of it."

Audience members open up to him after the performance, he says. "Because I'd shared my own experience they felt OK to talk about it." ■

*Collin Williams presents My Suicide Note along with Eugene comedian Cienna Jade 9 pm Monday, Nov. 26, at Old Nick's; \$10, \$8 students, 21-plus.*



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