

## We All Matter

The slogan “We matter” has had a great impact in my life. This eight word statement seems like common sense but it is something that is underrated in modern day. Suicide has been commercialized by shows such as *13 Reasons Why*. These shows make suicide seem like a good way out, but in reality it is the taking of a valued life and affects everyone around them. The “I matter, you matter, we matter” shouldn’t be just a week-long statement, but a phrase that we hold onto for life.

“I matter” is something that I have to repeat to myself daily. It is not an arrogant phrase I use to uplift myself above others, but to remind myself that my life has a purpose. For me, I matter is a continual reminder that I was placed on this Earth for a reason. Psalm 139:13-14 always comes to mind when the purpose of life is questioned. It says, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Faith is a very important part in my life. From day one, I was created to be wonderfully and fearfully made. I believe each one of us was made to do something important in this world. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Florence Nightingale all did things that impacted the way we live today. Everyone is capable of changing the world around them, but we must first believe that we can.

When we fully realize the importance of “I matter” it is then crucial to show those around you that they also matter. “You matter” is such an important message to share and it is close to my heart because I have seen the impact it can make on people. For example, last spring, I spent a week serving the people of Mission, Texas. One day, my group volunteered at a nursing home. I expected to go in and speak to some sweet elderly people. I did not take into consideration the language barrier between our group and the residents. I spent the next two hours attempting to

communicate with a group of women with the little Spanish I knew. By the end of the two hours, I was shocked to see the impact we had made on them. They couldn't speak English and we couldn't speak Spanish, but we didn't let this obstacle defeat us. As we said goodbye, one of the women had the biggest smile. She kissed my cheek and blessed me before I left. I didn't fully comprehend the impact of making someone feel like they mattered until this Mission Trip. Being able to impact others brings more joy than anything you can do for yourself.

“We Matter”, the last part of the Magalassi slogan, is the most important part. It includes me, but also encompasses those around me, and people on the other side of the world. Every single life is valuable and it essential that this message be spread everywhere. Suicide rates have risen exponentially in the past couple of decades and the time to make people aware of it is now. The National Center for Health Statistics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released that the second highest death in fifteen to twenty-four year olds is suicide (Santhanam). Another sickening statistic is that in less than two decades the suicide rate between ten to twenty-four year olds has risen fifty-six percent (Santhanam). For a long time, people thought it was best to not talk about suicide. They believed that if we talked about it then it would become more popular. However, ignoring the problem is not the solution. Being honest about struggles, allowing for open conversations to occur, and teaching people of the signs of suicide is very important to help suicide rates decline. I saw this first hand at my school when we began our first suicide prevention week.

It was about three years ago when I wanted to do something to show people that they did matter. After some thinking, I thought an impactful project would be for everyone in my school to write on a card why they mattered. Then I would take these cards and put them on a sign that had the number of cards and put that number followed by “reasons why not to”. This sign would

then be displayed where everyone could see and read reasons of why they mattered. I did not end up putting this plan into action; however, until the summer before my senior year. As a junior, I was elected NHS secretary and I began to plan how I could start my suicide prevention poster through NHS. I decided that for my final year of high school I wanted to do something that was bigger than myself, so I met with my advisor and proposed my idea. She loved the idea and from there we decided to not only make it a one day thing but a whole week. I helped our NHS council to plan sidewalk chalking the Sunday before school. We wrote encouraging messages and called Monday “Chalk about why we matter”. Throughout that week we tied purple ribbons on cars and gave purple bracelets to each middle school and high school class and talked to them about the importance of the week. We also had the opportunity on the Thursday of our prevention week to have Mrs. Magalassi speak to our whole school. The impact was unforgettable.

Our school allotted forty minutes for us to have Mrs. Magalassi come and speak. She did a wonderful job of sharing her story. Through her opening up, our student body was able to see the impact suicide had on the loved ones of Brandon. Suicide does not only end a life but it affects the people care for a lifetime. Mrs. Magalassi did not need the whole forty minutes so a student from our school volunteered beforehand to share his story. He took the stage and opened up about his struggles. He shared about his past addiction to pornography. He shared that he tried to end his life several times. The longer he spoke the more emotion that took over. The whole room had all their attention on him. He continued to share about taking an overdose of pills. He took enough that he knew once he fell asleep he would never wake up. Thankfully, he got out of bed and told his parents. From there he was rushed to the hospital and miraculously saved. He shared the hard moments but turned his story to one of redemption through Jesus. His

transparency that day increased people's understanding of the issue. After his story we allowed a response time. Anyone who needed to talk, pray, or simply needed a hug was welcomed. The response was unbelievable. At first it was a small movement, but it turned into a moment of openness and confession. Students who had built so many things up allowed themselves to be open. They shared and let people in. I know many people, including myself helping a middle school girl, spoke for over an hour. A forty minute chapel of open honesty led to uncountable conversations of struggles and healing.

The thing that hit me the hardest that day was it all came from students that no one would expect to have problems. No one expected the boy that spoke that day to have that kind of story. He was one to always crack a joke or tell a story. It is easy to think that the front everyone puts up is true but in reality a front can hide a lot of feelings. That is why I believe it is so important to incorporate a suicide prevention week into schools. Whether it is an assembly with someone who is willing to share their story or a simple school project, you never know the impact it can have on someone. Our school did end up making a poster that week. After learning and getting connected to the Magalassi foundation I modified what the poster said. Our school has about 400 students sixth through twelfth grade so it said, "400 Reasons Why We Matter". This poster still hangs at the front of our school, where everyone can read all the notes people wrote of their importance. Suicide Prevention is possible but the road to lowering the rate is long. The start can begin now. It begins with a smile and living a life that shows that I matter, you matter, and we all matter.

### Works Cited

Santhanam, Laura. "Youth Suicide Rates Are on the Rise in the U.S." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 18 Oct. 2019,  
[www.pbs.org/newshour/health/youth-suicide-rates-are-on-the-rise-in-the-u-s](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/youth-suicide-rates-are-on-the-rise-in-the-u-s).