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Don't Be A Period, When You Can Be A Semicolon

As a Ram, we have all heard and experienced “We Matter” week. You see teachers and the whole Pom Squad wearing the “We Matter,” or “You Matter” shirts of the year. You may see the posters around school, but I do not think we truly acknowledge the meaning of it. To a point we all just kind of brush it off because we are so used to it; at least, I know I did. It was not until I was personally affected by the subject that I truly understood the meaning of “We Matter.” “We Matter,” is far more than a tradition or a week of the year; it is a daily message, and a lifestyle. You are loved, and incredibly important to this world, it needs you. It needs you, it needs me, it needs us, and that is why I matter, you matter, and we matter, so we have to stick around to find out what the world has to offer in return.

In the American Psychology Association website Lea Winerman says suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States, and the second-leading cause of death in ages ten through thirty-four. As a result of this, schools have been trying to prevent suicide by having suicide awareness events. Owasso High School has a “We Matter” week. During this week, shirts are sold and there are posters around the school. It was just another week of the year to me. Sure, you see more posters than usual, and cute and creative shirts that are being sold, but nothing out of the ordinary happens. It wasn't until my brother committed suicide that I truly understood the meaning behind it. He mattered. He mattered to me, he mattered to my family, he mattered to his friends and his girlfriend, he mattered to his teachers and he mattered to the world. I just wish he would have seen that.

In today's society, suicide is not taken as serious or given the attention it needs. Yes, it is an uncomfortable subject, but it is an important one and one that needs to be talked about. Nowadays, people take suicide as a joke. If kids at school have a lot of homework, are stressed or overwhelmed the most common phrase is "I am going to kill myself." The sad thing is they do not truly understand what that means. Everyone knows they are not serious; they are not actually going to kill themselves because of the amount of homework they have. However, we have gotten used to hearing it over and over again, we do not even pay attention to it. Twitter, Tik Tok, and other forms of social media have become platforms where saying "I want to die," or "I am going to kill myself," or the abbreviated form "kms" is a "relatable" and actually, a normal thing to say. But the majority of the time when people say those phrases, they do not mean it. They do not want to end their lives, they are just going through a hard time and that is their way of expressing it. But how would we know when someone is actually going through a rough time, and are thinking about ending their lives? I think it has become so second nature to us, we have become blind to those who actually need us.

The main reasons for suicide are because the individual feels lonely or they have been carrying an unbarring pain for too long. That is where "We Matter" comes in, regardless of who you are, you matter, I matter and we matter. A simple phrase, yet a deep meaning. You are important, I am important, and we are important. We are loved. We matter not only to our friends and families, but we matter to our school, to our work, and most importantly we matter to this world. This world needs us, and we need to stick around to see what it has to offer.

As opposed to what many may believe, taking one's life is not the easy way out, in fact it may be the hardest thing they did in their lives. My brother suffered from depression for many years. I came into his life two years before he passed away, and he showed me the meaning of

“blood does not make you family, but love does.” In what we thought were his darkest days, he said he could not, in his right mind, take his own life. When he passed away he was a freshman in college, he had a girlfriend, a band, friends and a new loving family that supported him. Many may say he was the happiest he had ever been. No one saw it coming, but the pain was too much. This is why we must always treat others as if they are fighting a battle because chances are, they actually are, we just do not know about it. Suicide is more than just an act, it has a reason behind it. Whether a traumatic event happened, or suffering depression for years, suicide is not to be taken lightly.

I believe the first step to effectively promote the concept of “We Matter” is to put ourselves in other people’s shoes, treat others the same way we would want to be treated. Smile, a smile can go a long way, or a simple comment acknowledging someone. Show them they matter to this world, acknowledge them, show them they are someone, and they would be missed. It is the little things that matter. I do not know if a simple text saying “hi!” or “I miss you,” or even “Have a good day today, love you” would have changed my brother’s mind, I do not know if a smile or a “what’s up dude, how have you been?” while he was walking around campus would have had an impact on him. I know there is nothing I can do to keep my brother here just one more day, but I do know even though I could not change his mind I can do my best to change others’. I can keep families and friends from suffering and going through what my family went through. And hopefully I can keep someone in this world so they can realize how truly beautiful life can be.

I matter, You Matter and We matter. Smile, be nice, acknowledge someone, make them feel like they matter to this world, make them feel loved and important because they are, and so are you. Do not end the sentence, keep it going and see where it takes you. Don’t only be the

semicolon, but show others why they should be too. Show them life is worth it, at the end of the day it is all worth it, but you must get their first and find out why.

Works Cited

Winerman, Lea. "By the numbers: An alarming rise in suicide" *Monitor on Psychology*,

American Psychological Association, Jan. 2019. www.apa.org/monitor/2019/01/numbers.