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The Intrinsic Value of Human Life and its Free Will

Suicide is a permanently scarring course of action that affects many more people than the ones who commit it. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention records that the suicide rate in 2018 was 14.2 for every 100,000 individuals, and 129 suicides every day (Suicide Statistics). People commit suicide because they are misguided (whether by others or themselves) into believing that they would be better off dead. So naturally, the best way to break down this dangerous lie is to remind ourselves and the people around us that “we matter”. To say that we matter has multiple serious implications. When we say that we matter, we acknowledge that we, as human beings, are filled with God-given potential and free will. We have the capacity to influence our lives and the lives of others in a way that nothing else can. On top of this, every person out of the billions who have walked the earth is completely unique. No two people share one life, and everyone has something to offer that no one else can. That in itself is the very definition of value! But even past the pragmatic point of view, human beings are living networks, full of connections and relationships, loving and loved. Those who love and rely on us would be devastated if we were to end our lives too soon. Saying “we matter” means to me that we remember the value within us and celebrate that value with others. We say that we matter when it might feel like we don’t, because the reality is that many people feel that way about themselves. Like the body, the mind needs to be exercised to stay healthy and productive, and remembering one’s immeasurable potential is a great way to exercise the mind. Since we recognize each other’s value, we should always seek to raise up those who are feeling low. Everyone has felt hopeless before, and many have considered that the rest of their lives aren’t worth living, but ending one’s life is not done without devastating consequences. For this reason, it cannot be denied that we, as loved human beings, matter.

Often times, people have a tendency to oppose one another. Selfishness is a strong motivator, and some mind less than others when it comes to taking advantage of other people. When we act in this way, we portray a message that sharply contrasts with the message of “we matter”. Rather, living for yourself at the expense of others sends out a message of “I matter more”, or “You matter, but not enough for me to care”. This sort of behavior is infectious too. Those who are wronged and feel mistreated are more likely to turn around and wrong someone else in an attempt to tip the scales again. When this behavior compounds on itself over and over again, it can be absolutely devastating to those who are subject to it. The phrase “I Matter, You Matter, We Matter” is the cure for this spreading disease. Not only do we acknowledge the value of human life in general with this phrase, but we also address the individual. We can accept that we are equal in value despite our differences when we say this, and it frees us from harboring hatred for one another; hatred that would otherwise be left to fester and spread, leading to something grievous.

In a school setting, it’s all too easy to become so overwhelmed by studies and drama and extracurricular activities that we forget to acknowledge fundamental truths around us. Sometimes we know these things to be true, but we just simply forget them because of how busy we are. For this reason, I think putting uplifting posters around school would be an effective way to communicate to students that everyone matters. It would serve as a subtle reminder for students to appreciate themselves and the people around them. However, not everyone only needs to be reminded that they matter; some need to be convinced. I think it would be a wise decision to leave the contact information of an adult or a trusted student on these posters who is willing to talk confidentially with people who struggle to understand why they have value. Beyond raising awareness, the most important thing someone can do to prevent suicide is to talk

with those who may be considering it. When we are depressed, spending too much time in our own thoughts has a tendency to make it worse. That's why we need the fresh perspective of others from healthy relationships to keep our heads held high. Suicide is a frightening and discouraging topic, but the truth is that people who take their own lives do so because they believe in the lies they hear that tell them they don't matter. The good news is that as long as we promote the truth, it will always be revealed that, despite the things we hear, we matter.

Reference

Suicide Statistics. (2019, April 16). Retrieved February 1, 2020, from

<https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>