

IQ's at least 10 points higher than others in the general population. So, they are good at hiding things that they want to hide. This often makes it difficult for others to see the signs of suicide. Second, as a society, we are not trained to recognize the signs and symptoms. Education is key! Parents need to educate themselves, so they understand the signs and can get help for their children, to save lives.



## Day 6

- It is OK to directly ask, "Are you thinking about suicide?" People who are struggling in the depth of depression cannot see a clear path to asking for help. Often, with their distorted thinking, they do not feel worthy of receiving help.

When Kenny was a freshman, I noted a significant change in his mood that lasted for several weeks. My friend, a child psychologist, told me to bring him to the hospital for an evaluation. When I reached out to Kenny to go, he just got up and went with me. He knew he needed help, but did not know how to ask. Our children also do not want to let parents down. So, they hide their feelings from us. After a three year battle, Kenny stood on the train tracks and ended his life, and our world changed forever.

Talking about suicide will NOT put the thoughts in a young person's head. Talking to someone with a healthy brain will not cause them to contemplate suicide. Talking to someone who is thinking about it gives them permission to ask for help. ASK the question. Be compassionate. Be ready to respond with bringing a child for an evaluation.

## Day 7

- BE KIND. In this day of social media, people, including adults, are forgetting how to be kind. People will type insults – horrible words – that they would never say to a person's face. Instruct your child to NEVER tell a peer to "go kill yourself". This is happening far too often, every day, in all of our schools, including elementary schools.

Life is precious. We need to teach our children to be kind. To be understanding. To be compassionate. To be empathetic. To accept everyone, including those who struggle with a mental health disorder. We adults set the examples.



In crisis call **1-800-273-TALK**  
or text the word **AIR** to **741-741**.  
[www.AttitudesInReverse.org](http://www.AttitudesInReverse.org)

# NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS WEEK

Days  
of

7  
Reflection

## Thoughts on Losing a Child to Suicide

After the death of Kenny, Tricia Baker and her family took their pain and started Attitudes In Reverse®, a 501c3 non-profit that educates students about good mental health and suicide prevention. Tricia's hope is for no family to lose a child to suicide ever again.

# Day 1

- Never take your children for granted. Sometimes I watch parents who are chastising their children for the littlest things. I know we get tired as parents, and I would never criticize anyone for his/her parenting skills. We all make mistakes as parents. I look back on my memories of parenting Kenny, and how I wish I was able to find more inner strength to find patience. I was a full-time working mom, and I remember coming home from a long, stressful day at work, not having a drop of energy, and knowing I had to start my "quality time" with my children. How I wish that I knew, from an early age, that he had an illness. How many times did I scold him for his behavior resulting from his illness, unfairly, not understanding?

So, please parents, the next time you are at the end of your rope, and your children are being silly or disruptive, instead of saying harsh words, TAKE A DEEP BREATH, and try to smile. There is no guarantee that our children will outlive us. If we think this each and every day, we would choose our words more carefully. Kenny taught me so much. I believe Kenny was my gift that I received for 19 years. I am forever grateful for that gift.



# Day 2

- No one chooses to be mentally ill. Why would anyone choose to suffer in silence? Why would anyone choose to have thoughts racing in their heads so fast that they cannot think clearly? Why would anyone choose to not have the ability to get out of bed in the morning and be a productive human being? Why would anyone choose to be so different from everyone else, when all they want to be is "normal"? Why would anyone choose to have an illness that embarrasses them and leads them to self-medication with drugs or alcohol? Why would anyone choose to think that the world would be better off without them? Why would anyone choose to have daily battles with their own thoughts to fight to stay alive each day?



Kenny used to tell me that all he wanted was to be like everyone else: NORMAL. Mental illness is a biological brain-based illness brought on by some trigger. No one chooses it. We cannot just snap out of it. Telling someone to just snap out of mental illness is like telling someone to just snap out of having cancer or heart disease. NO DIFFERENT. People who live with mental health disorders understand this.

Our hope is to educate the rest of society to help increase understanding, empathy and kindness towards those who are struggling because their brains work differently. STEP UP! START THE CONVERSATION! SAVE A LIFE!

# Day 3

- One in four are affected by some mental health disorder. Less than 40% seek treatment. Lack of treatment or delayed treatment can result in poor performance in school or work, problems with relationships, physical ailments, homelessness, incarceration and most horrific, SUICIDE. If someone had a broken bone, they would go to a doctor. If someone had a heart condition, they would go to a doctor. If someone had cancer, they would go to a doctor. Why is it that less than 40% of those affected by mental health disorders seek help? STIGMA: The fear and embarrassment of discrimination and judgment due to a biological brain-based illness. When we present Coming Up for AIR™, our educational program, to students, we realize they all know this.

No one wants to be made fun of. No one wants to put themselves at risk of being bullied. Kenny was embarrassed by his illness and told peers that he had mononucleosis for over three years. I ask everyone to make an effort to understand what living with a mental health issue is like, how difficult it is. I ask everyone to make an effort to not judge others, to not be so critical of each other. Let's try to make an effort to understand what others are going through and to be more compassionate and empathetic. Instead of cruel harsh words of criticism, please offer a helping hand. You just never know when YOU may need the helping hand.

# Day 4

- "I don't understand why?" So often, when we lose someone to suicide, we struggle with this question: "Why?" So often, those who end their lives by suicide appear to have so very much to live for, so why do they feel that they do not? What we, the outsiders, need to understand is that people who end their lives by suicide are making decisions with unhealthy brains. People who struggle with depression and other mental health issues, as hard as they try, cannot realize those good things in their lives. How we perceive life is complicated, but more and more research is being done, showing that how we feel and think depends upon our brain functioning. We need to educate, so we all know the signs to look for. All talk of suicide must be taken seriously, even if the person appears to have a promising future.



# Day 5

- "There were no signs." When Kenny made his first suicide attempt, he was at the peak of high school success. He was a math honor student, a freshman swim star, a role model to teammates and friends. He had a girlfriend who loved him. Knowing what I know now, as I look back on his life, I now see the signs that there was the onset of an illness.

What I have learned since Kenny's death is that there are almost always signs. People who have mental health disorders are most often highly intelligent with