

Mental Health

Sept. 15th, 2019 (posted on Facebook)

With World Suicide Prevention Day being earlier this week, it got me thinking about something. It made me reflect on a few things in my own life. I know how lucky am I that I've never been contemplating suicide or suffering from depression. However, I have had some serious issues with anxiety in the last couple years. At times, they have been much worse than I've led on. One of the positives that I've discovered in this time period is solidifying certain friendships.

I was fortunate in college to make a lot of new friendships. Of these friendships, some of the closest ones today are ones where we really didn't speak to each other much while in classes together. On the flip side, a few friendships I thought were pretty strong are ones that don't really exist anymore. Some of the closest friendships are situations where that friend has been struggling with anxiety, depression, or even something worse.

Sometimes I've found out that a friend and myself have a lot more in common, that we've been struggling with very similar issues. In talking about those issues and supporting each other, sometimes just with some kind words of encouragement, you can feel those friendships strengthening. I've been on both sides of that situation. I've seen the appreciation of my friends when I'm just checking in to see how they've been doing, and it jump-starts a conversation that can be incredibly rewarding for both sides. I've also learned how much I've appreciated the support from friends when I've been down in my life as well.

So, this brings up a point that I feel a lot of people don't want to recognize these days. When it comes to friendships, it is incredibly easy (sometimes too easy) to be someone's friend when everything is going well in their life. Social media like Facebook is kind of like cruise control for friendships. It allows people to give the appearance of really being there for someone with just a few clicks, instead of taking that next step.

The real challenge is supporting a friend when they're struggling with something. Sometimes you might not even know what you should say, but just having that dialogue might mean everything to that friend. Being there and

supporting a friend in these times is truly challenging, but it can strengthen that friendship twenty times more than a “like” ever could. I’m much wiser about friendships now than I was a couple years ago. I understand which friends accept this challenge to be there to truly support friends when they are struggling. I also know a few friends that I probably won’t talk to much from here on out.

Ultimately, I hope many of my friends know that I’m someone they can talk to if they are down or struggling with something. To be clear, if we are friends on any level, whether good friends or we don’t know each other really well, if you’re struggling mentally with something, my proverbial door is always open. Even if I don’t know what I should say, I promise I’ll give the effort and try my best. Like I said, I’ve been on both sides of this and have seen friendships grow through talks that are not easy to get through. I won’t take the easy route and be your friend when it is easy or convenient to be friends. We all know enough people that fit the bill. I’ll be there in the tough times if you need someone to talk to. This isn’t some “pat myself on the back talking myself up” post. I genuinely care about those that I call friends, and I don’t want to see them hurting.