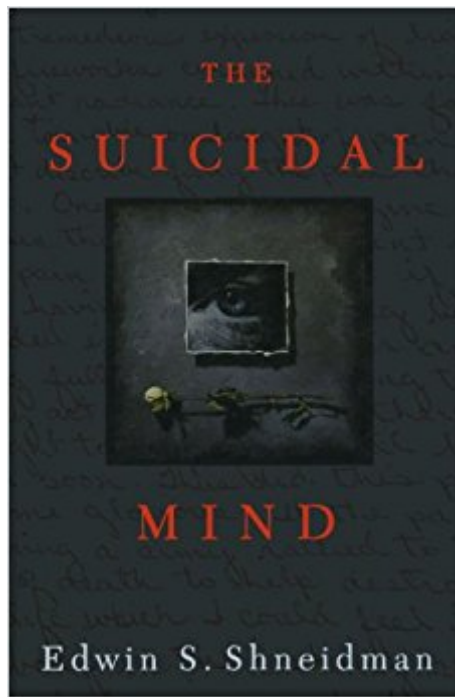


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The Suicidal Mind



Synopsis

Suicide haunts our literature and our culture, claiming the lives of ordinary people and celebrities alike. It is now the third leading cause of death for fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds in the United States, raising alarms across the nation about the rising tide of hopelessness seen in our young people. It is a taboo subtext to our successes and our happiness, a dark issue that is often euphemized, avoided, and little understood. In our century, psychology and psychiatry alike have attempted to understand, prevent, and medicalize these phenomena. But they have failed, argues Dr. Edwin Shneidman, because they have lost sight of the plain language, the ordinary everyday words, the pain and frustrated psychological needs of the suicidal individual. In *The Suicidal Mind*, Dr. Shneidman has written a groundbreaking work for every person who has ever thought about suicide or knows anybody who has contemplated it. The book brims with insight into the suicidal impulse and with helpful suggestions on how to counteract it. Shneidman presents a bold and simple premise: the main cause of suicide is psychological pain or "psychache." Thus the key to preventing suicide is not so much the study of the structure of the brain, or the study of social statistics, or the study of mental diseases, as it is the direct study of human emotions. To treat a suicidal individual, we need to identify, address, and reduce the individual's psychache. Shneidman shares with the reader his knowledge, both as a clinician and researcher, of the psychological drama that plays itself out in the suicidal mind through the exploration of three moving case studies. We meet Ariel, who set herself on fire; Beatrice, who cut herself with the intent to die; and Castro, a young man who meant to shoot his brains out but survived, horribly disfigured. These cases are presented in the person's own words to reveal the details of the suicidal drama, to show that the purpose of suicide is to seek a solution, to illustrate the pain at the core of suicide, and to isolate the common stressor in suicide: frustrated psychological needs. Throughout, Shneidman offers practical, explicit maneuvers to assist in treating a suicidal individual--steps that can be taken by concerned friends or family and professionals alike. Suicide is an exclusively human response to extreme psychological pain, a lonely and desperate solution for the sufferer who can no longer see any alternatives. In this landmark and elegantly written book, Shneidman provides the language, not only for understanding the suicidal mind, but for understanding ourselves. Anyone who has ever considered suicide, or knows someone who has, will find here a wealth of insights to help understand and to prevent suicide.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With over forty years of experience to support him, Dr. Shneidman concludes that "our best route to understanding suicide is not through the study of the structure of the brain, nor the study of social statistics, nor the study of mental diseases, but directly through the study of human emotions". It is his belief that those persons who commit suicide do so to either avoid or to terminate unbearable psychological pain due to the persistent frustration of vital psychological needs. The psychological needs that he refers to were first described by Henry A Murray in *Explorations in Personality* (1938). According to Dr. Shneidman, most suicides are partially attributable to one of five clusters of frustrated psychological needs: 1) thwarted love, acceptance, and belonging; 2) fractured control, predictability, and arrangement; 3) assaulted self-image and the avoidance of shame; 4) ruptured key relationships and attendant grief; and 5) excessive anger, rage and hostility. The suicide is not so much a factor of the particular need but rather the intensity of the frustration of whatever need is basic to the functioning of that person. It is the goal of the psychotherapist, or therapist in general, to recognize the psychological needs of the suicidal patient and to help the patient see alternatives to suicide that will alleviate their psychological pain. Dr. Shneidman offers no data to support his conclusion, only forty years of experience studying suicide as a clinician and researcher at UCLA. In *The Suicidal Mind*, he uses three case studies to illustrate the application and utility of his basic hypothesis. Indeed, his hypothesis is basic; that is, it seems obvious that suicidal persons are experiencing severe psychological pain.

From my point of view, this book draws a very good picture about the suicidal mind. It mentioned why and how people become suicidal and how early intervention can help healing this mind. I like

the way the author presents the topic suicide. He presented it in an academic and scientific way, which is a great way for others to understand suicidal thinking. It has valuable case studies and scientific research for others to understand the topic of suicide. It is for professionals, friends, family and significant others who are associated with the suicidal individuals to read, for the sake of understanding their judgmental mind and their "incurable" psychological pain. This book creates a bridge for others to understand what is on suicidal individuals' head and why these individuals are reluctant in seeking help (the emperor in their head that now becomes the dictator, which eliminates the option for the depressed/anxious individuals to choose how to live life). It is NOT a book for suicidal individuals to read immediately to alleviate their psychological pain (because I bet this pain has been accumulated over years and this book is too scientific to cure the pain), though, it can be a wonderful resource for the person who is walking through a steady recovery path out of depression/suicidal thinking. It is a book for suicidal individuals to read when they have the courage to accept the past form of lethal destructive thinking. But certainly, it is NOT an immediate remedy for the cure. Books that introduce opening your heart to listen without judgment and books about love, compassion and forgiveness are the ones that need to be recommended to suicidal individuals. Therapies and medications are also necessities for these individuals to feel better.

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