**Rational Words for the Suicidal and Self-harming**

Dear fellow fallible human being,

If you've felt intense pain on and off in your life and you are considering suicide or self-harming through cutting, recognize that your rational thinking is being masked by the pain. I understand well how horrible it can feel for you & how you’d like to do something to turn it off. The fantasies of suicide may give you an escape & knowing that escape is an option gives you comfort.

BUT-- You have to be really honest with yourself and realize these things about suicide—and promise yourself not to ever even try to commit suicide (because you could mess up and be successful by mistake):
Bad feelings and bad times pass when you allow yourself to think rationally. Then, you experience good times. Life has its ups and downs, to be sure, but there are ups that make it really wonderful.

Cognitive activation theory says that when we activate a certain thought, there is a spreading activation of similar thoughts. So, can you go look at some pictures of yourself happy? Or think of a good time you had & didn't even expect to have?

Underlying your pain, you may really want to be alive. Can you think of a time that you were relieved that you narrowly escaped a car accident or cancer or something else & you felt joyous to be alive? Let those thoughts remind you of your desire to live.

Talk to friends, family, a therapist, and even a crisis hotline. Here is the number for a crisis hotline to call if you want to remain anonymous: 800-SUICIDE & to prevent cutting 1-800-dontcut.

Behaviorally, you can work to learn how to self-soothe. Maybe it will be by taking a hot shower, swimming, swinging, playing with your pet, taking a walk, reading a book, listening to music, singing a song, or playing catch. Remember catch?

I've heard this idea & it is really true: Suicide is a PERMANENT solution to a TEMPORARY PROBLEM. A better idea is to write out what your problems are—your problems are what is really part of what is causing the pain. Then take a few minutes to breathe slowly. Spend a moment considering true solutions to your problems that do not include suicide & write out some ideas for solutions on the other page. This will help you deal with the real problems, instead of running away from them through suicide or self-harming through cutting.

Often, suicidal people do not realize that they are not alone. But, really, you are probably not as alone as you believe yourself to be at this moment. There are others who love you deeply & you may not fully understand how much you mean to people because they don’t express it to you in a way you can hear it/see it/feel it/know it. But it is really there & I hope you will believe me when I tell you that more may be waiting for your in the future.

Think about others. Do you have any folks who are younger than you & who look up to you? Any folks who copy you? You may be their leader.

Dr. Bandura (founder of social learning theory), demonstrated that we learn through copying the behavior of tohers. If you were to kill yourself, you would increase the risk that they would do the same behavior. So, you need to remember that your actions have consequences for others.

Also, there are some folks who would be devastated by your actions. Think of them.

You CAN learn to have happiness in your life. You may have to work on it if it doesn’t come naturally, but it can be learned. I teach it to my patients all the time. It takes some work & then one day, they're thanking me for teaching them how to tune into their own healing & how to allow for joy. They learn to laugh, to love, to work at a job that satisfies them, to taste good food, and to share themselves (instead of hiding). They learn to be brave. They learn that courage is a much more satisfying alternative than they'd imagined. They learn appreciation, humor, and sensitivity toward music, nature, children, animals. They learn that they have a HEART and they learn that it can be opened through rational thought & connectedness to LIFE.

In teaching others, I have become more able to notice and appreciate the many times when I experience true happiness, which is something I never knew I could learn to enjoy when I was younger. You can also experience this. You have a lot to look forward to. Then, you can teach others too.

If you devote yourself to rational thought, you might notice that very often, if you put your mind to something, you will achieve it. You are blessed with many gifts & even if you don’t believe in your gifts, others have probably been confirming your gifts to you at various points in your life. Can you tune into those memories? Recall those moments when others have also told you that you are good at certain things or complimented you. Your inner guidance has also tugged at you to take note of your abilities--it has made you sit up and notice your own surprise at yourself at times.

Create the opposite of suicidal feelings--create joy. One way to feel the opposite is to take what Dr. Linehan (founder of DBT) calls opposite action. Act as though you’re happy & sometimes you will feel happier. You can do this by acting goofy, silly, playful, creative, funny, etc.

Another way to feel the opposite of suicidal is to commit to a really big goal & work on it often. For me, it was making my book a #1 national bestseller & I started from nowhere. I’d never written a book. That goal came from a dream that was given to me at a point earlier than I can remember. I just know that the dream was always there. What dreams do you have? Why not devote your life to living them out? They are there for you & living them out will inspire you!

Your inner guidance, if you turn to it, will help you to see that you have an actual obligation to stay alive (except in extreme conditions), and that each life is the world. If you change one life, it is like changing the world. You can change a life for the better by being around. Think about that. If you believe that you can help even one person, then please own this obligation.

When I say such things to my kids, they say I'm annoying. I don’t mean to annoy you, only to point out that you don't know what tomorrow brings unless you stick around to find out. I hope you will work with a therapist if needed & figure out what strengths you need to develop to help yourself now.

Stay alive!
With love,
Dr. Pam Garcy