

# 'Loneliness kills you faster than anything in the world'

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METROLAND MEDIA WEST GROUP

## Young people speak out about depression and attempted suicide

Three days a week Will Waldron makes it out to school. The other two days he stays home — those are his bad days.

Dealing with depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, borderline personality disorder and anxiety sometimes gets the best of the 16-year-old Burlingtonian.

Twice, the teen has attempted suicide.

Looking back to those hopeless nights two years ago, he says one thing would have made his life easier — if his parents had the knowledge back then, that they have today.

That was the aim of the Halton Suicide Prevention Coalition's annual general meeting at the Halton Regional Centre Thursday. With a focus on preventing youth suicide, health care professionals from across the region gathered to hear Waldron's and Blake Bliss's experience dealing with suicidal thoughts at a young age.

"I do not suffer from depression anymore because I do not search for happiness," said Bliss, who's in his early twenties. "I don't think I can find happiness on this earth."

He said dealing with excessive bullying since he was a child pushed him into a state of extreme depression. He remembers first feeling depressed when he was in Grade 4.

"Loneliness kills you faster than anything in the world," he told the audience.

Bliss urged all those in attendance to work together, "so people don't get bullied and find some peace. And hopefully we can find a way to bring compassion back to this world."

Both Waldron and Bliss shared their thoughts on preventing suicide among youths.

"It's impossible to have too much support," said Waldron. "Sometimes support needs to be tough love, but there could never be too much of it."

On the night he decided, on a whim, to take 30 sleeping pills before bed, Waldron said he was torn between the two options he had before him.

"I could take the chance that I could go to sleep and never wake up again or I can go talk to my parents," he recalled. "I just kept thinking,



**Dr. Alan Brown**

how mad are they going to be at me?"

Ten minutes passed before he woke up his mom.

He said the stigma surrounding depression makes it hard for youths to come forward about what they're feeling.

"When we see a cancer patient, we swarm them with love, compassion and support. But these thoughts of suicide and depression, they are so unknown people are afraid to say the wrong thing. At the same time they're afraid they're not saying anything. It's a vicious circle

of people not knowing what to do.

He stressed the need for a more open dialogue about depression and suicidal thoughts.

Bliss said he's frustrated with the reliance of prescription drugs when it comes to treating depression. "We are becoming desensitized to our own problems...our mechanism now is pills, pills pills."

His advice to those dealing with mental illness is to find a therapist they can develop a personal relationship with. "Keep searching for someone who is best suited for you. There are a lot of compassionate people out there."

Dr. Alan Brown, head of the department of psychiatry, Halton Healthcare Services, stressed how important hope is when dealing with adolescent depression.

"It's troubling when I hear a young person say, 'I don't think things are going to get better for me,' or 'I stopped thinking about the future.' Hope is important."

Brown, the keynote speaker of the morning event, revealed shocking statistics about youth suicide.

According to Brown, 20 per cent

of adolescents will consider suicide in the course of a year and somewhere between five and 10 per cent will attempt suicide, which is the third leading cause of death of 10 to 19-year-olds.

He said rates of suicide differ depending on gender, culture and ethnicity. In Western countries males between the ages of 15 to 19 are five times more likely to commit suicide, however in Asian countries the prevalence rate is higher among females. Also, aboriginals are six times more likely to commit suicide than non-aboriginals.

Risk of suicide tends to increase in teens with a family history of suicide behaviour, teens with divorced parents, homosexual youth and those who abuse drugs and alcohol, to name a few.

Throughout the meeting, all speakers stressed the need for more communication surrounding depression and suicidal thoughts, as Halton Regional Police receive, on average, one call a day related to suicide.

"Adolescent suicide, I can't think of a more tragic outcome," said Brown.

For more information, visit [www.suicidepreventionhalton.ca](http://www.suicidepreventionhalton.ca).



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Laura Crumb  
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