



Broken hearts and broken minds

Rebecca Arnold
Co-Editor-in-Chief

“You know what’s more forever than family? Mental illness.”

Families are meant to be together. That is the general consensus. However, there are times when that is just not possible. Senior Lex Cresshill* has been dealing with such an era for years.

“People often tell me that I have to love my family, but the fact is I don’t. Those people tend not to have the kind of family that tears itself apart and mends itself back together at the drop of a hat,” Cresshill said.

Cresshill’s family deals with a multitude of problems. Her mother and brother suffer from depression, both her parents are alcoholics and Cresshill herself has dealt with depression, anxiety and suicidal feelings.

“I’m tired. I’m not just tired ‘of them’, but I’m tired of all of it. I’m tired of playing the ‘how are we feeling today’ game. It’s so much effort. I want to give up on them. But then there’s this tiny little part of me that says, ‘Come on, what if it’s for real this time?’” Cresshill said.

Fifteen years ago, Cresshill’s parents went

through a tumultuous divorce. When Cresshill was fourteen, her mother was arrested for drinking and driving while Cresshill was in the backseat. Cresshill remembers that the police officer was “astonished at how much alcohol a tiny anemic redhead could put into her body at once.”

“The reason she drank was her depression. She only got more depressed when she drank though, so I don’t know why she thought it helped. She would tell me and my brother about her suicidal thoughts and stuff, how we were the only reasons she got up in the morning. Which you can imagine screwed me up pretty bad myself,” Cresshill said.

After her driving incident, Cresshill’s mother went to therapy and Alcoholics Anonymous.

“That’s when my brother started to really hate her. My dad also acted like he was all supportive and stuff, then he completely turned around and stabbed her in the back when she really needed his help again.

“Each of us except my brother has learned

Even I admit I turned my back on her, but I was fourteen, how am I supposed to deal with my main parent doing something like that? I was sure I was going to die that day,” Cresshill said.

It was not until recently that the situation seemed to start getting better, but Cresshill wonders if the change will last.

“Right now things are more harmonious than they’ve ever been before. In a way, it’s painful. I’m scared to think that maybe this is the beginning of the end to this bad blood, because I don’t want to get my hopes up only to have them destroyed again. Part of me wants it to go back the way it was because I’m absolutely terrified of hope,” Cresshill said.

Cresshill and her family do the best they can when dealing with

that we have to look at what we might be doing wrong just as much as

about herself and her beliefs have been formed due to the way her family

what someone else might be doing wrong. The biggest problem is the lies we tell each other. We try really hard not to lie to each other. The biggest obstacle is mostly the lies we tell ourselves,” Cresshill said.

Despite the changes, Cresshill’s family lacks the “togetherness” that many other families have. Each person deals with his or her own problems, not everyone else’s.

“We’ve never done that thing where we sit down in the living room and talk about our feelings. Our only real way of working past these things has been working on ourselves. When my mom and my dad started working on their alcoholism, my mom on her anxiety, my dad on his lying, me on my hateful depression, things began to come together on their own,” Cresshill said.

The state of her family has even affected the way Cresshill acts outside the home. The way she thinks

trying is better than not,” Cresshill said.

Rita Limbaugh, the Community Education Director at the Mental Health Center of Madison County, says family support is one of the most important things someone suffering from a mental illness can receive. Families need to adjust in order to help each other, because the person may not even realize that he or she is suffering from a mental illness.

“It’s not uncommon for someone to wait ten years [before being diagnosed]. By then, they may have burned their bridges with their family,” Limbaugh said.

Cresshill says that her family is not as bad as it could be. Her family tries. Cresshill has advice for anyone who has a family that does not try. According to her, a person should worry about his or her own health before trying to fix someone else’s.

“If your family is one of those, my only advice is get out. Protect yourself. You are incredibly valuable. Please, please don’t let them kill you – body, mind or spirit. You deserve better. You deserve a chance to live,” Cresshill said.

*Name changed to protect identity

{14.5%}

OF HIGH SCHOOLERS HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

c/o teensuicidestatistics.com

{1 in 5}

AMERICANS ARE AFFECTED BY A MENTAL ILLNESS

c/o webmd.com

WHEN THE RAIN WON'T STOP

how suicide, depression and mental illness hit close to home

Student facing hard times cries for help, receives much-needed aide from counselor

Jason Frost
Co-Editor-in-Chief

It was not a normal day for then-junior Bryce Stelly. He started off as usual, finding his friends in the cafeteria, sitting down for a biscuit and engaging in conversation. But he soon lost his appetite, and revealed something else that was on his mind.

He wanted to commit suicide.

“I was worried about my grades. My brother and sisters always made AB honor roll and stuff like that. My stepdad would kind of joke, but it was cruel. He would make fun of me. Call me a retard. I felt like I had let everyone down- my parents, my friends, my teachers... I just felt

like I wanted to end it,” Stelly said. Stressed out about school and his family, Stelly began to feel isolated, sitting alone at lunch and contemplating the eternal sleep for almost a week. One morning, he reached his breaking point. Bleary-eyed and flustered, he came to school and broke his normal breakfast routine, seeking advice from friends about the decision to end his life. He kept getting the same answer: visit a counselor.

“Telling people made me feel good, like I wasn’t holding it in anymore. It was like having an empty ball in my chest, and I got that out,” Stelly said. “I actually went to Mrs.

Haynes for help. She won’t tell you about it because she’s not trained, but she is the one who helped me through it.”

Stelly was taken to a local help center and had his blood taken to check for hormonal imbalances. After a bit of counseling, he began

feeling better about himself. School guidance counselors often have to deal with troubled teens seeking assistance from difficult home lives or stressful school environments-

some of whom have turned to suicide as a way out.

“I’ve had a number of students come to me, many just questioning their existence or their purpose in life, saying ‘do I matter?’ They have feelings of being isolated or depressed. It could be a lot of

things that may convince them they have no other road. You just have to talk to them and get them help,” counselor Lorri Haynes said.

Looking back now,

{20%}

OF TEENS WILL EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION BEFORE ADULTHOOD

c/o teendepression.org

Stelly is glad he went to get help, citing the academic improvement and consistent support from faculty and students in trying to bounce back from the abyss.

“It’s hard to describe to someone who has never been there. You don’t think clearly. You just have to look forward, forget about your problems and move on. It’s never worth it,” Stelly said.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for teens, most of which was preventable.

“Talk to someone you feel you can talk to- a church member, a friend or an uncle. If someone comes to you

telling you they want to end their life, it is your responsibility to make adults aware. Don’t ever think someone’s just joking,” Haynes said.

Now a senior, Stelly has returned to his normal classes, making plans to attend culinary school in the fall to fulfill his dream of being a chef.

“A lot of kids find themselves in that situation for whatever reason,” Stelly said, “and they don’t think they have anything else to live for. But that’s not true. There is always something in their lives to live for. I’m glad to be here today.”