

# February More Voices: Suicide

Category: Suicide

written by Paul Gross | February 1, 2023

Dear *Pulse* readers,

My cousin Pedro had pale, northern European skin and straight brown hair—looks that contrasted with the olive complexion and black waves of his adoptive parents, my Cuban uncle and aunt, and their two biologic daughters.

My brother and I met Pedro when we went to visit my uncle's family in Colombia. He was about sixteen at the time, an outgoing teen who dressed well, liked to party and had *Playboy* photos stuck to the walls of his bedroom.

A few years later, he took his own life. The explanation I heard was that Pedro was gay, and my uncle, despite Pedro's pleas, could not abide a gay son.

Pedro was the first of a handful of people I've known who've died by suicide.

One was a mental health professional I worked with. She was a lovely individual, with a warm personality, a ready smile and a good sense of humor. If you had asked me to rank order who in our health center would be most likely to kill themselves, I would have placed her close to last.

One day, she failed to show up for a talk she was supposed to give our residents—a talk on teenage suicide. Instead, we learned, she'd jumped to her death from a high-rise apartment, leaving behind a husband and two small children.

"You never know what people are going through at two in the morning," a psychologist friend once remarked to me.

That rang true. I myself had been through my own two-in-the-morning despair. In my mid-twenties, feeling bereft and desperate, I picked a phone one night and called a suicide hotline.

The line was busy.

The fact that I found some humor in that busy signal, even in the moment, suggests that maybe I was still a couple of steps away from the edge.

A few weeks later, I sat in a therapist's office. "You haven't thought about killing yourself, have you?" he asked, in a tone that suggested my woes were not all that serious.

"No," I lied. I didn't mention the phone call.

And I went looking for a more capable and empathetic therapist.

Years earlier, I'd gotten up one somber morning in my bleak New York tenement apartment, one with peeling paint and a tub in the kitchen, and considered my options in a frighteningly detached and matter-of-fact manner.

*If I kill myself, I thought, Maman would be very upset.*

That truth kept me from following the emotional train I was riding to its logical destination.

More recently, some dear family friends, two loving and devoted parents, lost a twenty-one-year-old daughter to suicide. Her act was like a bomb detonating. No one suspected a thing. Everyone who knew her was shocked—and devastated.

“Suicide,” a friend remarked, “a permanent solution to a temporary problem.”

My thoughts went in another direction: *This could happen to any parent.*

My wife and I gathered our two grown daughters. “Please,” we said, “if you’re ever feeling that low, promise that you’ll call us—or call *someone.*”

They promised.

We felt a little better, but at the same time reflected that two in the morning is a country far away, where promises and even the rules of physics may not always hold.

February’s *More Voices* theme is [Suicide](#). What story do you have? Share it with us.

For more details, visit *More Voices* [FAQs](#). And have a look at last month’s theme, [Me, Too](#).

Remember, your health-related story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry, please.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes to you and your loved ones,

*Paul Gross*  
*Editor*

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**The National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline number is 988.**  
The Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support  
to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States.  
**Call or text 988 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.**