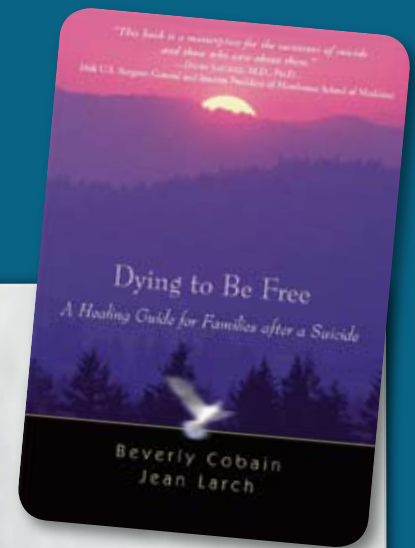


Dying To Be Free



Dear TAPS,

Suicide, a word that no one ever dreams will be connected to them. It is as bad as that other terrible word....Widow. Imagine one awful day where you get both. That was my nightmare one year ago this month.

My husband, Major John Ruocco, was a United States Marine. He was strong, proud, dedicated and charismatic. He was a true leader who people looked to for strength and support. His incredible sense of humor could make even the darkest of days seem bright. I never heard him say "I can't". His only fear was that he would let someone down.

Three months after John returned from a tour in Iraq, he committed suicide. I never saw it coming. I have a Masters Degree in Social Work. I have counseled suicidal individuals. I had even helped John to prepare a suicide prevention brief that HE gave. I NEVER SAW IT COMING. My world was turned upside down. The questions were bottomless, and the only person who could answer them was gone. How could this happen to us? How could the loving husband and father that I knew do this? He had two young boys that he adored and a bright future. He had everything to live for. What could have been so bad? How can you be so close to someone and not know how much pain they are in?

In my search for answers I seemed to exhaust every resource. I read, I talked, I listened, nothing seemed to help answer those burning questions until I read *Dying To Be Free*, by Beverly Cobain and Jean Larch. This simple, concise book helps family members to understand how their loved one could get to the point where suicide seems like the ONLY option. In *Dying To Be Free*, Beverly Cobain writes of the day she herself became suicidal... "at no time during that day or evening did I think about my family, my children, my friends, my therapist or how any of them might react to my death. It was not that I didn't love or care about all of them, they just weren't a part of my state of mind. I was totally hopeless and focused on the only way I could imagine to free myself from unbearable emotional pain." The authors go on to state, "when a person can no longer tolerate the intense psychological pain, when he reaches the point where death seems the only way out, without some meaningful intervention it is only a matter of time before the suicide."

As I read this book, all the thoughts, questions and feelings swirling in my head started to come together. My thoughts became more organized, and seemed to make a little more sense. I felt some comfort in the fact that there were reasons why I missed it. I felt some strength in the fact that I had new understanding that might help me prevent such a tragedy in the future.

I want to thank TAPS for caring enough to take the time to send me this wonderful book. With the amount of pressure our military families are under at this time and the rise in suicide rates among us, I hope we can all join together to better understand the mystery of suicide and offer support to those left behind.

Kim Ruocco

Kim Ruocco

Widow of Major John Ruocco, USMC



To request a copy
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