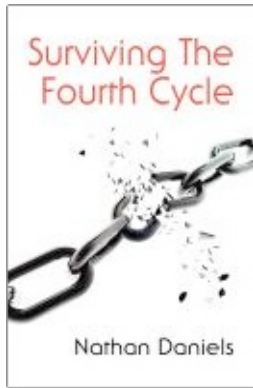


Surviving The Fourth Cycle



Nathan Daniels



Surviving the Fourth Cycle is a uniquely-told, true story about overcoming suicide, for anyone affected by the harsh realities of mental illness. Nathan Daniels rips his closet door off its hinges and the skeletons come rattling out through his intense writing. Read along as he picks through the bones, examining the powerful relationships and experiences that have led to both his struggle to function in society and his ability to persevere.

Surviving the Fourth Cycle

Order the complete book from

Booklocker.com

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6455.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

**SURVIVING
THE FOURTH CYCLE**

By

NATHAN DANIELS

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE.

Copyright © 2012 by Nathan Daniels.

ISBN: 978-1-62141-813-9

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

Printed in the United States of America.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2012

First Edition

For information, address Nathan Daniels
daniel@www.survivingthefourthcycle.com
<http://www.survivingthefourthcycle.com>

1.

JOURNAL ENTRY
(I Want To Die)

08 / 01 / 11

I want to fucking die!

I tried going to work today, but it proved to be impossible. Finally, I have to face what I've been hiding from for the last four months. It's happening again, and I'm so fucking scared! Every time I go through one of these... Cycles, I come closer to death.

I'm such a fucking disaster!

I can think of three separate times in my life when I've been this lost, alone, and confused. I can't believe it's happening to me again! I'll refer to this as "The Fourth Cycle."

It started creeping up on me a few months ago when work-related stress had me feeling withdrawn and alone. At the same time, ghosts from my past began to haunt me with increasing, and relentless intensity.

I feel like I'm doomed!

It culminated over the summer when my irrational and delusional thought process caused me to abandon my family. I really thought I was protecting them, but it's all so hazy in my mind. I still can't believe I moved out of my home.

NATHAN DANIELS

I still can't believe Hailey allowed me back in.

I'm not convinced it's for the best. Now, my loved ones are subject to the sight of me tearing myself apart with insanity and guilt. It seems to get worse all the time, and today everything changed... again.

It's getting worse!

I felt like shit the second my alarm went off at 4:45 this morning. I lay in bed crying as quietly as I could into my pillow, searching for the will to get out of bed and start my day. This went on for well over an hour before I finally found the strength to rise up on my shaky legs.

I put my pants on slowly, and then cried for twenty more minutes. I struggled to figure out how to put my shirt on as if it were a fucking Rubik's Cube, then I cried some more. I put my socks and shoes on in a daze, wiped at the drying streams on my cheeks, and tried to leave.

Just approaching my front door made my heart rate quicken, and I reached for the knob as if I expected it to be scolding hot. My legs felt weak, my vision went blurry, and my hearing became muffled. I opened the door and saw the world rush in at me... attacking me!

I could feel the impact and nearly fell.

Dizzy, I stepped outside and my knees buckled. I knelt down on my front step, and felt like I was going to throw up, but since I hardly eat anymore, I dry-heaved instead. I was sweating and could feel my heartbeat banging against the inside of my chest and skull. I crawled back into my house... a failure.

I lay on my floor crying again... shaking. Searching for inner strength and coming up empty. My eyes burned and my mouth was dry as I sucked on air that seemed to keep getting thicker and harder to breathe. I tried to leave again, but ended up leaning my forehead against the door, feeling defeated and

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE

wishing the Grim Reaper would come for me in all his silky, black glory.

No cloaked figure came to me, but my first rational thought since I woke up this morning did. If I made it outside, and by some miracle into my car, there was no way I would be capable of driving myself to work without risking innocent lives.

Somewhere deep inside my mind, I already knew I would be going to the hospital, not work. I could no longer function, but it was so fucking hard to admit that to myself. I've been stubbornly ignoring the obvious signs for months, with the false hope that my problems would just go away. They never do.

It's hard to acknowledge that I've reached a point where I can no longer take care of myself, and if I don't seek help, I'm going to die. I can feel myself dying this very moment! The walls are closing in quickly... but back to this morning.

I had to wake Hailey, who is impossibly accepting of all my issues, and told her about my struggle, and my realization that I needed to go to the hospital. I asked her if she would drive me to work, so I could talk to my boss about my situation in person. I didn't want to do this over the phone. I wanted her to see what she was seeing... a quivering, fucking mess!

We dragged our four-year-old son out of bed and headed toward Providence, as I stared out the passenger side window, wishing I were a better man for my family.

When we arrived, Hailey went inside to get my boss. There was no way I was getting out of that fucking van! The world was waiting for me out there... with its teeth bared!

When he approached me in the parking lot, I told him how screwed up I was with a trembling voice, through my cracked window. I told him I'd be going to the hospital and had no idea how long I would be in there, or what would result. He was

NATHAN DANIELS

worried, but assured me that my job would be safe. Wishing me health and luck, he disappeared back into the building with a distraught look in his eyes.

It was a quiet ride home, as I focused on breathing and keeping my eyes squeezed shut. I counted to twelve-hundred, sixty-two.

So, here I am now, sitting in my spider-infested basement, whining silently into these pages about my pathetic life. I have a small desk in the corner, surrounded by paint-chipped concrete. I can hear the rusty pipes dripping behind me, and the pungent smell of mildew and stagnant smoke envelopes me. It floods from time to time and there's a musty dampness in the air. This is my comfort zone.

Things scurry about on the floor, descend from the overhead beams, and buzz about the room. I have a single candle burning on the edge of my desk, making slithering shadows dance around me, with its flickering flame. I can hear every creak and stretch of the house in the night, and my tired mind is playing tricks on me. I do my best to ignore the things that aren't real and just keep writing... but it's hard.

I decided to put the hospital off until tomorrow. I might be in there for a while, and I wanted to spend some time with Hailey and the kids before I have myself committed to a mental institution for the second time.

It's the middle of the night and sleep is just a fantasy to me. I'm driving myself crazy pondering the intense mysteries of my mind. What happened to me? Where did it all go wrong? Can anybody else hear that sound? Are the shadows in my peripheral vision really moving toward me like that?

I'm nervous and it's difficult to write with my hands shaking so violently, but I don't want to stop. Picking up a pen and desperately trying to organize my thoughts was the only thing I could think of to do. It has been helpful to me in the

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE

past, when my mental illness has decided to stick its chest out and show me who's boss. I should've embraced this familiar, but neglected passion sooner. Writing is one of the only things that has the potential to keep me somewhat anchored to the planet.

That... and taking a razor to my flesh.

I'm tired of feeling like a stranger in my own skin and struggling, daily, to find the strength to go on. I'm scared to go to the hospital tomorrow. I'm afraid to talk to people about just how fucked up I really am, and how badly I need help. I'm scared of that fucking whispering I hear, and those goddamned shadows... one is touching me now.

I want to go crawl into bed with Hailey and feel the comfort of her arms around me, but I feel like I'm a disgusting thing that belongs in the basement... hidden away. I don't want to disturb her rest with my pathetic weakness, and irrational frame of mind. It wouldn't be fair... I should suffer alone.

I'm afraid of everything, and I don't want to be alive anymore. The self-loathing is intolerable and I know my family deserves so much more than I'm capable of giving them. I can't even look in the mirror anymore, because I don't recognize the reflection. I feel... far away.

Where did I go?

Who the fuck am I?

2.

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF

My name is Nathan Daniels.

I'm a thirty-six year old man struggling through, what I consider to be tough times. I'm a middle class, blue-collar guy who wears jeans and t-shirts. I have dirty blonde hair, shaved in a military style, green eyes, and a few tattoos. I'm five feet, ten inches tall and weigh one hundred sixty pounds. I hate shaving, so I usually look rather scruffy, and I would consider myself an average looking man.

I'm quite sure I'm dying. I've lost sixty pounds in the last four months, and I've cut myself over a hundred times. I want to save my life, but it's not going to be easy considering I'm also the one trying to end it.

I'm fucked up in many different ways and on many different levels. At times like this, I tend to define myself by my problems, and have to make a great effort to remind myself that I'm also many different things, to many different people. I need to explore everything if I'm to find the truth behind what's been happening to me for more than half my life.

I'm in the hospital right now, searching for help. I have a substantial list of disorders that have plagued me in various combinations, and various degrees throughout the majority of my existence. Four times now, I've had my life interrupted and

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE

threatened by these ailments. Twice now, I've been here... in a room that locks from the outside, staring out a window that's sealed shut.

I'm depressed.

I hate saying, "I suffer from depression." It sounds so whiny and pathetic, but there's no way around it. I'm fucking depressed! I'm currently slithering through my life trying to avoid visual and audio hallucinations, severe panic attacks, and blackouts.

I cut myself frequently to keep from totally slipping into the black abyss of my mind. This terrible coping skill developed in my youth, and has grown in both frequency and severity throughout my adult life. I think it used to give me a certain sense of control, and helped anchor me to the real world.

Lately, however, there's been a new development in this old ritual. I've been blacking out and doing it. This is a new and terrifying experience for me. All of a sudden, I'm holding a bloody razor blade and have twenty fresh wounds on my leg. There's a certain creepy awareness of having done it, but not actual recollection.

I feel like I'm falling apart and it just keeps getting worse instead of better. I can see the toll my struggle is having on my family. It makes me feel guilty, exhausted, and hopeless. More and more, death appears to be the only way out, and I know my sub-conscious is steering me violently in that direction.

I'm suicidal.

Intellectually, I understand the reality of my potential suicide. I would be murdering my son's daddy, and abandoning the love of my life and her children. How could I ever do such a terrible thing to the people I love? I have to admit though, I think about it more than ever, and have become an expert at telling myself dangerous and convincing lies...

NATHAN DANIELS

"They'd all be better off without me!"

"I'm just making everyone's life worse!"

It's fucking scary how I can warp reality sometimes and make suicide seem like the right thing to do. When I'm at my lowest, I try to keep myself as sedated as possible with my substance of choice.

I'm a drug addict.

I love marijuana and have been using it for more than half my life. I also hate it, and believe that my usage has become out of control. I'm currently a miserable person to be around if I don't smoke several times a day. I don't get mean or anything, just very sullen and impossible to please. It's reached a point where I don't even get that high anymore. I can smoke bowl after bowl and not be completely satisfied.

I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from many lingering memories.

My sister molested me when I was six years old. This went on for almost a year before my mother walked in on us one day. I also grew up with a constant threat of violence from my father, and the never-ending verbal emasculation he administered... pussy, faggot, and mama's boy were just some of his favorite nicknames for me.

He died when I was seventeen, so did my grandfather, and my mother too. This parade of death took place in a three-month period. It's clear to me today that I've never fully recovered from that horrible storm, and I don't know if I ever will.

Later, during my twenties, I had a ten-year dysfunctional relationship with a virtual ghost of a woman. This was a severely depressed personality, who was a master manipulator of every negative emotion. I made her my wife during my *Second Cycle*, and allowed her to chip away at my sole for the better part of a decade. I know we never truly loved each other.

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE

Every woman I've ever been in a serious relationship with has cheated on me, sometimes more than once. Even my beloved Hailey repeatedly betrayed my love and trust in the beginning of our relationship, opening the flood gates for even greater lunacy and emotional despair.

Every one of these situations has injured my heart and mind. All of these events and relationships still cause me great pain through flashbacks, nightmares, and in some cases, daily reminders. When the pain lies dormant, I lie to myself that I've worked through it and achieved closure, but it always comes back with a vengeance. I haven't worked through shit and I'm crazier than ever!

I have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

This can be extremely frustrating at times. I count... a lot. The steps I take when I walk, how many times I chew my food, how many commercials in each break during a television show. I time everything as well... how long it takes to smoke a cigarette, take a shower, or drive to the gas station and back. Sometimes I get lost amidst the relentless numbers marching through my head. Half the time I don't even realize I'm doing it, then all of a sudden I can hear... *sixty-seven, sixty-eight, sixty-nine*, in the back of my mind.

I have Agoraphobia and severe Social Anxiety Disorder.

When I'm outside of my comfort zone bad things tend to happen inside my mind. This limits me to my house, my therapist's office, and a few places where I do my shopping, banking, and other routine errands. Driving has become all but impossible, so when I do go out it's always in the passenger seat.

Having a family, and being in a relationship with a woman that I love and care about, I try to push the boundaries of my Agoraphobia almost every day. It's difficult to describe the symptoms that attack me accurately, and get people to

NATHAN DANIELS

understand that the things I see and hear are as real to me as this paper.

I become Hyper-Vigilant, and normal sights and sounds overwhelm me. My very own senses turn against me and knock my world upside down. It's a mutiny from within.

At a grocery store, my vision rebels against me. The lights are far too bright all of a sudden. The isles seem impossibly long and are twisting and warping before me. The people become horrible reflections in a funhouse mirror. I'm dizzy and disoriented, sweaty and shaking. I'm reacting physically to my irrational terror. I want to vomit. My heart is beating way to fast... way to hard. I think I can actually see it kicking against my chest! Paralyzed, I want to run, but I can't.

I see lines of every size, shape, and color scratching at my eyes everywhere I look. Lines linked together in intricate and familiar ways. They horrify me, because I know that they're letters, and they form words that I should be able to read, but I can't because I've become a deer in the headlights and I feel like I'm going to start crying.

I'm wondering where they keep the razor blades... I think its isle seven.

"Clean up in isle seven." My mom's voice, impossibly, says over the intercom. I have a vision of my pale dead body lying in a pool of blood on the shiny white tiles. Customers shop around me, because I don't matter. My wrists are open like crying mouths, and there's a backwards seven reflected in the growing red mirror I made on the floor. The image swallows me up, and I can't find the real world for a moment.

Meanwhile, the kids are running around out of control. Part of me knows I should be parenting and dealing with them, but it's taking all of my strength and will not to freak out next to Cap'n Crunch and Count Chocula! I glimpse a frustrated Hailey. She's trying to get the best deal on cereal for us,

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE

restrain a screaming four year old, and plead with the older ones to act their age.

There's worry on her beautiful face too. Worry that her psycho boyfriend is about to go "rain man" in the grocery store. As I'm absorbing all of this, I have a moment where I truly wish I were dead.

My illusions gradually subside after we leave, and I'm in the sanctity of our minivan. Emotionally drained, I cry the entire ride home.

"Deep breaths" Hailey always tells me. It works, and I never implode as I think I will. She is truly something special, and I must never lose sight of the effect it would have on her if I were gone. I suppose there are many relationships in my life that I need to think about, both past and present, in my quest to find myself again.

I'm somebody's son... of course, or at least I used to be. My mom was the best friend I ever had, and I still miss her immensely. I'll dream of her sometimes and wake up with a tear-soaked pillow. It hurts me beyond description, that Chris will never know his grandma. They would have loved each other.

Then there's my dad...

In some ways, after all the time that has passed since his death, I'm still trying to get to know the stranger that was my father. This mostly takes place in my imagination, or my heart, if you want to be sentimental about it. I'm not sure if my dad would have been any better at being a grandpa than he was at being a father. I'd like to think so, but unfortunately I'd never know for sure.

I'm somebody's brother, but I have no relationship with my sister whatsoever. In fact, we've spent most of my life completely estranged from each other. My sister moved out of our house a few years after "the incident."

NATHAN DANIELS

I did crash at her place from time to time when I was homeless, but this was short lived. I get physically ill when I'm in her presence, and I don't know if that will ever change. Three decades after the fact, I'm still battling demons that were born in my sister's bedroom.

I'm an athlete, at heart anyway. I've spent half my life developing my body, and the other half trying to destroy it. I've been passionate about bodybuilding since I was a child, but you would never know that looking at me now. I used to be able to leg press a thousand pounds in the gym, now my legs can barely handle descending a flight of stairs without vibrating uncontrollably.

I'm an employee, who has always done well climbing that metaphorical ladder in any company where I've worked. Then I go through one of these *Cycles*, and lose everything I've achieved. I'm currently a Production Manager, and responsible for more than thirty line workers, but I'm not capable of handling that kind of responsibility right now. I fear I'm going to lose it all again.

I'm a father... and a stepfather. My son's name is Christopher, and in his short life, he has already done so many powerful things for his daddy without even knowing it. He vanquished all regret I may have had before he was born, as all the roads I've travelled lead me to him. He has given me the gift of the truest, purest form of love a human being can ever experience... that of a parent and their child. He has also saved my life on more than one occasion, when thoughts of him were the only thing preventing me from throwing in the towel.

I love my son. I love him with all my heart and soul. I'll do my very best to make his life as beautiful as possible, and shield him from the misery that haunts me. I will always strive to be a better father for him. Just being there could be the most important thing I do with my life. I'm so proud to be

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE

Christopher's daddy, and when I look into his deep blue eyes, I know we will love each other forever.

As a stepfather, I've come up a little short these days. I've stumbled and fallen as a male role model. Hailey's twelve-year-old son David, and eleven-year-old daughter Amy, deserve more than I'm giving them right now. I know that I hurt them both deeply when I hurt their mother. I can see the reflection of the mistake I made in their young eyes.

How can they trust me now?

How can they love me anymore?

I abandoned them, worried them, and scared them. Now, all of a sudden I'm back as if nothing ever happened. They must be so confused and dismayed. I have forever tarnished my status as a stepparent. I'm so sorry for what I put these kids through, and I have no idea how to tell them. I love them both very much and I hope I can find a way to repair our relationship. I hope we will all be able to heal as a family.

Hailey and I are not legally married, but I did tattoo her name across my ring finger years ago. We are partners in every sense of the word, financially, romantically, and of course in parenting. Paperwork and jewelry aside, I consider us husband and wife and I know she feels the same.

Am I a good husband?

I think I have been in the past, but not now. I'm distant, withdrawn, depressed, and carry a looming threat of taking my own life. Hailey is thirty-two years old and drop dead gorgeous... though I'm sure she'd disagree with me. She has blonde hair, blue eyes, and a body designed for me personally. More important is her unique, intelligent, and wonderful personality that allows her to deal with someone like me. It can't be an easy task... especially now.

We're currently in a terrible place in our relationship of nearly seven years, and it's my fault entirely. A couple of

NATHAN DANIELS

months ago I cheated on her with a woman that worked for me. I was guilty of having secret conversations with this person through text messages. We also shared awkward good-bye kisses at the end of our workday on two separate occasions.

In the swarming chaos of my mind, I became convinced I was falling in love with this woman. To this day, I can't understand why. I had never betrayed someone's trust before, and the guilt I felt keeping a secret of this magnitude from Hailey was crushing me.

I didn't have what many would consider a "real affair."

With the exception of those two kisses and a hug at the company Christmas party, we never even touched each other. There was certainly nothing sexual about it. I hid it though, because I knew it was cheating all the same. How would I feel if the tables were turned?

When Hailey found out what was going on, I got scared and ran away. I lived in a hotel for a little while, and then I signed a one-year lease on a condominium. Part of me really believed I was doing the right thing for my family. I knew I was coming undone, and I knew how crazy I could get. I was genuinely concerned that I would traumatize my family with my presence. I didn't think I was fit to be around people anymore.

I wanted to be alone.

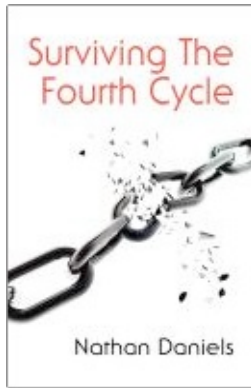
Hailey was pissed off, and rightfully so, but she wouldn't let go of me. I spent all my free time with her, reminded of just how powerful our love truly is. It didn't take much longer for me to remember that I can't live without her. I turned my back on my condo, broke the lease agreement, and went back home where I belong. I was gone for almost two months.

I've never stopped loving Hailey, and I'm in awe of her ability to love me after I was so careless with her heart. I wish I could see myself through her eyes. I might see someone worth

SURVIVING THE FOURTH CYCLE

saving... worth loving. All I see now is a mental patient in a hospital gown, with a tired look on his face. A man searching for help, that he's not sure exists.

As I said, I'm fucked up in many different ways, and on many different levels. I am also many different things, to many different people. I have to figure myself out, heal myself, try to resolve the plethora of issues I've developed over the years, and salvage my life for the people I love.



Surviving the Fourth Cycle is a uniquely-told, true story about overcoming suicide, for anyone affected by the harsh realities of mental illness. Nathan Daniels rips his closet door off its hinges and the skeletons come rattling out through his intense writing. Read along as he picks through the bones, examining the powerful relationships and experiences that have led to both his struggle to function in society and his ability to persevere.

Surviving the Fourth Cycle

Order the complete book from

Booklocker.com

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6455.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**