

This book is a powerful and invaluable resource in helping suicide survivors discover much-needed answers to their painful questions, the Truth leading to serenity in life, and what is most necessary for their recovery. Sharing insights from her profound experiences after the suicide of her beloved husband, Debbie Wilson offers survivors a simple and beautiful way for their broken hearts to heal.

From Suicide to Serenity: One Survivor's Story

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**FROM
SUICIDE
TO SERENITY:**

One Survivor's Story

by

Debbie Wilson

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CHAPTER ONE: THE END (AND THE BEGINNING)

“NOOOOOOOOOH!”, I screamed. “NOOOOH!!!! WHY NOW? WHY COULDN’T YOU HAVE WAITED ONE MORE DAY? WHY? WHYYY?”

My husband had killed himself. He had threatened; I just couldn’t believe he would do it. He had scared me before into hiding our gun. Why hadn’t I kept it hidden? Why hadn’t I stuck to my gut feeling?

Stepping into our living room, I cast a quick glance toward Bob’s favorite wing chair. His head cocked to one side, he looked asleep. I thought, ‘Oh, that’s such an uncomfortable chair to...’, then it hit me. I abruptly stopped to try and process what I was seeing.

Oh God, he’s gray! No movement. My eyes swiftly moved up to his face again...peaceful resignation. Seconds later, I grasp reality. The other side of his face, mutilated by a .357 magnum. So much blood, his eyeball out of place. I quickly turned away, trying not to look too close; I knew I would be destroyed if I looked too long. A bomb’s just been dropped onto my heart. But, most of me wanted to run to him and hold his hand the way we always had, for 15 years.

I had sensed something was wrong as I stepped through the garage door into our kitchen. Our dog, Baxter, whom we had adopted two years before, had always greeted me with a wagging tail. He wasn’t in his usual spot, which I thought was weird.

But then, that whole day was weird -- the phone call in the morning at work, the whispered “goodbye”, the strange sound of finality in his voice, and my lingering over lunch instead of going directly

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home, drumming up reasons not to go home. Bob had called me at work wanting to know if I made it all right to work in the fog; I assured him I had. As we continued to chat, I mentioned that I could barely hear him. He was very upset with me when I said that. Previously strong and masculine, his voice had been reduced to a soft-spoken breath.

Little did I know that he was mustering every last ounce of energy that he had to say his goodbye to me, then pull the trigger on his own life.

CHAPTER TWO: ON SHAKY GROUND

*...And you learn to build all your roads on today
because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans.*

I carried these words from a poem with me, in my heart and my purse, in the months before Bob died. Unable to rely on the people and things that had always brought me security, life had become an unsettling nightmare. Ten months before the suicide, Bob had taken off on a disability leave of absence from his job as a FedEx courier. Two accidents in his van (and several near misses) convinced me that he was a danger to himself and others on the road. He had started having panic and anxiety attacks as an Operations Manager for the company, then demoted himself to being a courier as the attacks worsened.

I had escaped death, but not major injury, from a severe car accident just a few years before. Three foot surgeries, elbow surgery, and rounds of physical therapy had weakened me mentally, emotionally and physically. I was walking in a lot of pain and felt battered -- by the medical profession, my family, God, and life in general.

Once the diagnosis was made that Bob's disorders were caused by a chemical imbalance and 28 years of alcoholism, I was livid. I was well aware of the drinking problem, but never imagined that our lives would be destroyed by it. Our finances in upheaval, I wasn't even sure we could keep our house. I could hardly deal with my own issues. I was fat, scarred, handicapped, in pain, and overwhelmed with Bob's and my own health problems. And now this: I was a widow, not of natural consequences, but of a suicide. How could he have done this?

My mind reeling, I ran to the bathroom in shock. Still screaming, both on the inside and outwardly, I railed on Bob.

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“WHY COULDN’T YOU HAVE WAITED ONE MORE DAY? WHY DIDN’T YOU WAIT FOR THIS DRUG TO WORK? WHY NOW?” But, I already knew the answers.

Bob had been on one mind-altering drug after another for nearly a year, none of which had altered him for the better. His torment had been almost unbearable for me to witness, and I felt increasingly helpless as I watched him deteriorate. The revolving door of psychotropic drugs - Paxil, Prozac, Klonopin, Buspar, Elavil, Triavil, and Lithium – had made him a human guinea pig. Desperate for a functional life, he had tested different dosages of these and other drugs. His condition ranged from drowsy and foggy to enraged and violent. I didn’t know what to expect on a daily basis.

The lithium finally calmed his anxiety attacks, but threw him into deeper depression. There was one more type of drug to try, a last-ditch effort when all other drugs fail. It was called an MAO Inhibitor. There were many food limitations with this drug, so we were supposed to go grocery shopping after I returned from work that Monday. I realized, with a sick stomach, that we wouldn’t be going anywhere together – ever again.

One by one, Bob’s pleasures in life had been coming to an end. Months before, he asked me what my favorite thing in life was, something that I would miss the most if taken away. I told him that I had missed being able to bicycle around a nearby lake after my car accident. I liked being outside, propelling myself with the wind in my hair, and feeding the ducks; I had sorely missed it as I lay in my hospital bed. Bob told me his favorite thing was booze. I stared at him in disbelief. Of all the wonderful things in life to enjoy, not to mention the experiences we had shared as a couple all those years, I couldn’t stand hearing that the vodka bottle had been his favorite.

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He also loved to eat and, with the new drug, his food would be severely restricted. He told me, "I don't drink any more and now I won't be able to eat either." He felt he was losing his grip on everything, not only the freedom to eat and drink what he wanted, but also his job, his mind, and me.

Bob had entered into an alcohol recovery program five months before he took his life, and the personality changes that followed were profound. He had always been so easygoing and good-natured to live with. Liquor softened him. Once sober (but with the different drugs in his system), he was unpredictable, sullen, out of control. On one drug, he slept endlessly, sometimes 12-14 hours a night, with long naps during the day. When he was awake, cotton-mouthed, dazed, and exhausted, he moved slowly about the house, looking to me for the sanity I couldn't provide. On another drug, he would go ballistic over little things, like my leaving a tuna can on the counter instead of immediately disposing of it. One day while I drove, he made a quick grab for the steering wheel, laying on the horn and screaming at a driver that upset him. My nerves were wracked. Bob had been my 'rock'. I couldn't fathom why God would put me through this, when I couldn't handle what was already on my plate.

In recovery, Bob was forced to face the behavior that he was responsible for -- the hindering of the trust I had for him, damage of our financial security, and troubles in his work and other relationships. This was unfamiliar territory and a difficult process for both of us. He had blamed my car accident and other things for his downfall, and I had allowed it. I entered into recovery with him, attending family nights, and started to learn and embrace my part in the destruction of our lives. I was advised to start emotionally detaching from him, a gut-wrenching and nearly impossible task. We had become almost like one person, unhealthfully linked together.

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Moving out of denial, we sought much professional help. We met with a couples counselor, we had AA and Al-Anon sponsors, individual therapists, as well as Bob's recovery program counselor and his psychiatrist to administer the medications.

He felt nothing worked for him, that no one understood his pain. He had been a 'quick fix' type of guy. At that point, there were no fast remedies, only slow struggles with major problems. I was torn between trying to detach, yet knowing how very much he needed me. Our life together was sliding downhill as I watched my once vibrant, quick-witted, bright husband become like a vegetable. I was broken-hearted, frightened, angry, frustrated, and depressed. I wondered what would become of us.

We had always been each other's crutch. When we met, I was 19, living on my own and working two jobs to support myself. My grandmother had been my only real stability, but she had died two years earlier. Bob was 26 and much worldlier than I was. He quickly became my savior and it was a role that fit him. He was overly protective of me, an ex-cop who would shield me from the harshness of the world. I had certainly already experienced it in my young life. I needed to feel safe again with someone who would take good care of me. He readily volunteered, wanting to marry me immediately. He wrapped me in his big arms, the way my Nana had, and my sense of safety returned.

His family life had also been unstable and we clung to each other out of great want and need. We loved and liked each other, and vowed to stick together through all of life's ups and downs. We supported and boosted each other. He grew me up, taking me from a youthful bride of 20 to a woman of nearly 35. After years of consistency and predictability, my savior, my 'rock' had crumbled.

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The details of my life would now be in my own hands.
Or, so I thought.

This book is a powerful and invaluable resource in helping suicide survivors discover much-needed answers to their painful questions, the Truth leading to serenity in life, and what is most necessary for their recovery. Sharing insights from her profound experiences after the suicide of her beloved husband, Debbie Wilson offers survivors a simple and beautiful way for their broken hearts to heal.

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