

# STORIES OF HOPE

## “She Got Me Through It”

### A’s Story

Do you know that feeling you get when something is wrong, but you just cannot put your finger on what it is? Well, that day, I knew something was wrong, very wrong.



On the weekend of what would have been our 4-year wedding anniversary, I received a call from my ex-husband. I wondered why he was calling me; after all, we had not spoken in over a year. He asked me if I was happy and if I was doing well. He explained that life was difficult and that if he could not have me, life was not worth living. He hinted that he might harm himself, and I worried about his safety. I knew he struggled with depression, but this time was different. It was not just what he said, but how he said it that made my heart sink.

It was clear he needed help, and I remembered the Access and Crisis Line (ACL). I found their contact information, and I asked him to call and talk to a counselor. He initially refused, but I said I would see him in person if he would at least call and see what his options were. I knew I could not control his choices, but if something happened to him and I did not try to help, I would never be able to forgive myself. When I met with him, he admitted his plan was to take his own life. We called the Access and Crisis Line and the counselor asked him several questions and provided mental health referrals. He refused to take any action towards addressing his depression. I stayed to talk with him for a while, not sure what to do. I did not want to be wrapped up in his emotional manipulation, but I knew he was in a lonely and dark place.

The next day, we spoke again. He was still unwilling to get help and unwilling to promise not to hurt himself. I did not know what the right answer was, but there was a feeling in the pit of my stomach that I could not just ignore. I needed advice from someone, a neutral person who would understand this kind of situation. I called the Access and Crisis Line, hoping someone there could walk me through this.

The counselor answered and I explained what was happening. It was such a relief talking to someone who could help me understand what was going on. After I explained the situation, we discussed different options, including one that I would have never considered on my own: calling the police. That seemed so strange to me. I mean, who calls the police on a loved one? I was very scared with this option, and I started to panic. She assured me that police departments

work with licensed clinicians in situations where people may harm themselves. She also told me that he *did* need help, and that I was right not to ignore the sensation that told me something was wrong. As my panic increased, she was both firm and gentle, and she patiently helped lower my level of anxiety. I knew deep down, even while I was frightened, that she was right about what I needed to do. The counselor's ability to walk me calmly through my own fear and panic towards my next step was comforting. Calling the police was still a difficult step to take, but her nonjudgmental encouragement and patience helped give me the confidence I needed to protect my ex-husband and myself.

After the police were contacted, the panic set in. I asked friends to come over and stay with me because I did not want to be alone. Then I got the call. The police let me know that he was in custody.

When we were married, my ex-husband told me that he had dealt with depression as a teenager. However, he kept his symptoms a secret from everyone. He had always kept his depression and suicidal ideation from everyone, even his closest friends. I contacted his family to let them know what had happened; I knew he would need their support.

I wanted to share this story because I believe that in many cases like this one, families do not know what to do or how to help. The Access and Crisis Line is a vital resource, not just for those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts, but for the family and friends of a loved one facing this challenge. When I look back now, I am grateful that I listened to my heart and sought out help for him. Not only was it an important step for him, but it was an important step for me. I am also grateful for the counselor who was there to help me make a tough decision. I had never before faced a situation like that, and she got me through it.

\* Consumer name changed to protect privacy