



How to SAVE A LIFE

*“Where did I go wrong?
I lost a friend
Somewhere along in the bitterness
And I would have stayed up with you all night
Had I known how to save a life”*

—The Fray, “How to Save a Life”

THE 2006 HIT SONG “HOW TO SAVE A LIFE” BY THE BAND THE FRAY IS A LAMENTATION, describing the singer’s attempts to save a troubled friend. Isaac Slade, former lead singer of the band, composed the song after working at a residential home for troubled teens, many of whom were battling mental health or substance use issues. One teen in particular, a musician like Slade, largely inspired the song. The young man described all his problems and explained that he had no support, and no one had a manual on how to save him.

Not many songs talk about mental health and substance use from the perspective of friends or families watching someone battle through it. Maybe that’s why the lyrics are so easy to remember, and maybe that’s why you usually think of specific people when you hear it.

I always think of Ellen. I met her in the parking lot during law school orientation. With our biology and chemistry degrees, we instantly bonded over our nontraditional paths to law. She was so bright and brilliant. Her smiles and hugs got me through many challenges, and I had courage to graduate early because she did it with me. My older brother really helped me out by marrying her, turning my friend into my sister.

After passing the bar, Ellen did the unthinkable and went on to medical school, and she did amazing, earning her second doctorate. However, we did not know how much she was struggling through it all. In residency, everything took a turn for the worse. For several years, she courageously battled mental health and substance use issues. Our family and friends rallied around her, providing all kinds of support during those challenging times. Ellen passed away peacefully on April 30, 2021.

Honestly, it never gets easier to talk about, and writing this article absolutely wrecked me. But I am hopeful that in sharing Ellen’s story, you are encouraged to really seek out and support those around you who are struggling or may have family members in similar situations.

We may not have a manual for this battle, but I am determined to avoid all stories ending tragically. Genuine, knowledgeable support can go a long way in saving lives. If you don’t know where to start, try scanning the QR codes with this article and visit the Texas Lawyers’ Assistance Program, or TLAP, website or the TYLA wellness hub.

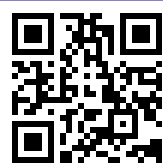
Additionally, all through September you will see articles and promotions for National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month. Please use these reminders to familiarize yourself a little more with the facts about mental health, substance use, and suicide. By informing ourselves, being aware, promoting healing, and sharing hope, we are in the best position to save lives.

LAURA PRATT

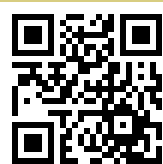
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