

### *Suicide (Prevention) Notes*

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**Conclusion:** No one really knows what makes determined suicide attempters stop at the last second. An important relationship remembered at that critical time in all likelihood is one of the reasons.

**Title of Paper:** “What Depression Does to Our Minds When It Attacks”

Elizabeth Griffin, MD (Psychiatric Times, May 2014)

**The Study:** An Article by Dr. Griffin, a psychiatrist, in which she describes her severe bout of depression and her decision to shoot herself in the head – a plan she finally foregoes.

**Discussion:** In the article, Dr. Griffin describes in graphic language what a severe depression feels like, how it sucks all the energy out of life and how feeling worthless follows. She writes that, “If I buy this gun, I will be dead tomorrow. If I don’t, I will live.” She holds off from buying the gun when she recalls how her father, a couple of months earlier, pleaded with her not to take her life.

The ensuing discussion focused on depression among mental health professionals and on the importance for all of us who suffer from a clinical depression to seek professional help – and how hard that is for many of us to do since we are “the experts” and therefore should know, in the eyes of our self-perception, how not to become depressed.

We discussed a recent patient from the IOL who, while a patient in the program, had initiated a suicide attempt via carbon monoxide poisoning in his garage, then after one minute aborted it. When interviewed about what made him stop, he said, “Seeing my daughter in my mind and not wanting to saddle her with my suicide.”

**Questions for further consideration:** While very little research is available to inform us on what leads some suicide attempters to change their minds and about their attempts at the last minute, it appears that the recall, or chance encounter, with a psychologically significant other is one of the important factors. How can we best use this knowledge in our suicide prevention efforts?

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NOTE: Each issue of “Suicide (Prevention) Notes” is prepared by a member of the IOL’s Executive Committee.  
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