

Suicidal Behavior



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Unambiguously suicidal behavior is when a person takes an intentional action they know will result in their certain and immediate death. There are many bad arguments for suicide and a few good ones, most having to do with the expectation of unbearable suffering. Given the variable nature of human experience, I generally encourage my clients to wait out the bad times and leverage their misery to formulate a new vision of their lives they can be genuinely enthusiastic about. Almost everyone thinks about suicide in one way or another, or

has the occasional warm feeling about death. The idea of one's own death tends to put things in perspective and is almost always helpful to examine in some detail, even though hardly anyone actually kills themselves on purpose.

More ambiguous self-destructive behavior is generally framed in terms of the level of mortal risk that can be tolerated in pursuit of some objective. We admire the first responders who place themselves in harm's way in the service of others and we say they are courageous. We understand how most people can ignore more moderate risk factors in favor of foods we find delicious or activities we find convenient or thrilling. No one regards these behaviors as suicidal and in fact, beyond an uncertain point, preoccupation with this sort of risk justifies a psychiatric diagnosis. It is only in the terminal stages of severe drug or alcohol addiction that we find truly suicidal behavior for which we can find no rational justification at all. This is the body rising up mindlessly in defiance of life. Survival at this point requires the attainment of one moment of extreme intellectual clarity in which radical and binding decisions can be taken in favor of life. Trust me. Call me.

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