



# Waking Up, Alive: The Descent, The Suicide Attempt... and the Return to Life.

*Richard A. Heckler*

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*Waking Up, Alive* addresses the penetrating hopelessness—the loss of faith—that leads one to suicide. Pain and suffering visit us all. No one is exempt. No one has earned a special status that enables him or her to live without heartache or anxiety, sadness or fear. Sometimes these emotions galvanize our spirit and our will, emboldening us to forge ahead, confident of brighter horizons. At other times, adversity falls hard about us, like a long, cold, dark winter's night, oppressive and impenetrable, sending us scurrying for warmth, or light, or someone with whom to wait until morning.

But for some people, morning fails to arrive. There is no place to run, or no one to turn to. For others, help may be available, but they are unable to reach out, let a loved one in, or even identify their pain. *Waking Up Alive: The Descent The Suicide Attempt and the Return to Life* is a book about suffering and the relief of suffering.

“It’s hard to imagine a hopeful or inspiring book on suicide,” writes the San Francisco Chronicle, “until you begin reading the astonishing *Waking Up, Alive*.” True, the words around these 50 people before they tried to kill themselves were often ones like “acutely depressed,” “isolated” “in unbearable pain” and “suffering in quiet desperation,” but the failed suicide attempt act itself appears to have performed a quiet miracle, forcing their lives into a new direction. “In their own words,” writes Kirkus Reviews, “Heckler’s subjects reveal the devastating effects of depression, traumatic loss, extreme family dysfunction, and alienation. As each of their stories unfold, the critical elements in the suicidal urge become identifiable. Early unresolved pain compounded by present adversity is a chief precursor of suicide. Many of the interviewees relate early experiences of loss and trauma... that they were not able to mourn: They were experts at putting up a façade. But once this façade could no longer be maintained, many... fell into a state that Heckler identifies as the ‘suicidal trance’. At this stage, suicide seems a logical option—almost an imperative... The catharsis of their suicide attempts were so powerful, in fact that many of the suicide survivors have moved on to success in the suicide help and counseling professions.”

“A wise and ultimately life-affirming work,” says Jack Kornfield, Ph.D. “EXTRAORDINARY,” writes the Los Angeles Daily News, “FASCINATING... Worthwhile reading both as a kind of survival epic and for the lessons it affords us all coping with the trials of daily life.” “An invigorating testament to the resilience of the human spirit,” writes Wayne Muller, “Richard Heckler skillfully guides us through the most unimaginable sorrow and despair, and allows us to taste the triumphant harvest of healing and grace.”

And with each reader who also steps into the shoes of those in the book, not only reading the stories and commentary but endeavoring to touch the humanity underneath, we begin to bridge the gap between those who have attempted suicide and those who haven't. We come closer to understanding the complexities of the human heart—theirs and ours—and we may even save lives.

The goal of this book is to inspire those who have experienced the devastating effects of depression, traumatic loss, extreme family dysfunction, or alienation and to provide the motivational help and understanding surrounding loss of faith, pain and suffering and to provide a path back to renewed faith and life.

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