

**Dr. Amy Vail**  
**Special to the Sun**

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## **Tahoe-Truckee suicide prevention: Turn to the helpers in your time of need**



Reach out and take the hand that can help to lift you up.



Dr. Amy Vail

## Know the signs

We all hold the skills to become helpers. The Know the Signs campaign is designed to give each of us the confidence and realization that we are able to help in times of need and are able to recognize the warning signs of suicide.

Visit [www.suicideispreventable.org](http://www.suicideispreventable.org) to learn more, and reach out to [smclarie@ttusd.org](mailto:smclarie@ttusd.org) to schedule a Know the Signs training.

TAHOE-TRUCKEE, Calif. — For many people, life can be complicated, isolating and overwhelming. Add to this puberty, geographic isolation, mood swings, and social media pressures and the results are often turbulent. Many people wonder how they will survive.

Robert Frost once said, “The best way out is through.” Everyone on the planet has tough times. Everyone on the planet goes through situations they do not know how they will survive. Everyone asks himself or herself at some point, “What is the point of all of this suffering and how will I make it through this situation?”

Many people are familiar with the Victor Frankl quote, “Whatever does not kill me makes me stronger.” There is truth in these words, however, it is not until someone has made it through the suffering that he or she can look back and reflect, “I made it through!” and ask themselves “What did I learn from that painful experience?”

For those of us in the helping professions, we work to help people through the darkest of times, through the moments and hours and weeks and months, sometimes years, when hope is gone and the light at the end of the tunnel is not visible.

We keep helping when people do not believe that there is any hope that things will change for the better. Why do we helpers do what we do? We helpers do what we do because we believe that there is hope, and we hold fast to the belief that where there is hope, there is the potential for growth and the potential for positive change.

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” To this day, especially in times of ‘disaster,’ I remember my mother’s words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers — so many caring people in this world.” Fred Rogers

We believe that where there is hope, there is the potential for life, for light, and for love.

When people are suffering, they often suffer alone. Knowing that there are people out there who care and who notice the suffering can be enough to decrease the deep sense of loneliness that engulfs the sufferer.

People often say, “Who am I to help?” or “What do I have to offer?” If you or someone you know is in a deep and dark place with steep walls, offer them some hope.

Let them know you notice and that you care. Often, when people see others suffering they do not know what to do, and out of fear of doing or saying the wrong thing, they freeze and do nothing.

As a result, the suffering increases. Instead, take the challenge, and let the people you recognize as struggling know that you see and acknowledge them and that you recognize their suffering and offer them some compassion and help.

Compassion is the recognition of suffering, and the desire to do something to alleviate suffering. When we as members of society hold compassion as one of the most important qualities a person can develop, and as a culture work to foster the development of compassion in our members, we will be on the way creating a society built out of the moral fabric that will uplift the masses and eliminate unnecessary suffering.

Even if you don’t know what to do, just ask, “How can I help you?”

If you or someone you know is struggling, look to the helpers in your world. Look to the caring people in the world who want to help you. Look to those who recognize your suffering, and still have hope that there is a way out of the darkness.

Turn to the people who can guide you towards the light. For it is always darkest before the dawn, but the sun does rise in the morning, and April showers bring May flowers. Perseverance can seem and be difficult, but there are those who want to help and who can help.

So when times are difficult, look to the helpers. If you or someone you know needs help, please ask for help. There are people in your life you can turn to. There are people who want to help and can help.

Reach out. Reach out and take the hand that can help to lift you up. Sorrow and pain and feelings of hopelessness do not have to last forever.

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