



# How I Stayed Alive When My Brain Was Trying to Kill Me: One Person's Guide to Suicide Prevention

*By Susan Rose Blauner*



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The statistics on suicide are staggering. According to the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in 1997 in the USA more teenagers and young adults died from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza and chronic lung disease combined. It is also an international epidemic.

Susan Blauner is the perfect emissary for a message of hope and a program of action for these millions of people. She's been through it, and speaks and writes eloquently about feelings and fantasies surrounding suicide.



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### **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

For 18 years, Blauner survived obsessive suicidal thoughts with the help of three psychiatric hospitalizations, an excellent therapist, 12-step support groups, "spiritual exploration," Prozac and a network of family and friends. This personal account of what worked for her offers excellent practical advice to "teach you how to get through those excruciating moments when every cell in your brain and body is screaming, 'I want to die!'" Approaching "suicidal thoughts" as an addiction, Blauner clearly explains how some people's "brain style" responds to environmental stresses or "triggers" with obsessive suicidal thoughts rather than cravings for alcohol or other drugs. Strongly influenced by the very successful 12-step model, she fashions a patchwork of strategies for understanding, preventing and treating suicidal "gestures," which she asserts are not actually attempts to die but efforts to stop unbearable psychological pain. Childhood sexual abuse and the death of her mother when she was 14 contributed to Blauner's long struggle, but she herself had to make the decision and effort to begin therapy at age 19, before her problem was even recognized or treated. Now Blauner provides others like herself with "Tricks of the Trade" that can literally save lives. With neither hollow platitudes nor medical doublespeak, she covers brain function, antidepressants, finding a good therapist, identifying triggers, creating a "Crisis Plan" for critical moments and heading off suicidal thoughts by coping with hunger, anger, loneliness and fatigue. Blauner provides an extremely valuable and much-needed tool for both suicidal thinkers and their loved ones. B&w illus.

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From Library Journal

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the eighth leading cause of death for all Americans and the third leading cause of death for those ages 15 to 24. Yet as Blauner points out, suicide is rarely talked about openly. In her heartfelt and important book, Blauner, who has survived multiple suicide attempts and developed a statewide suicide prevention program for teens in Massachusetts, offers guidance and hope for those contemplating ending their lives. The story of her 18-year struggle with suicidal impulses is followed by a concise explanation of the biochemical process inside the brain of a suicidal thinker. The bulk of the book consists of her 25 personal "tricks of the trade," practical, safe alternative activities any suicidal thinker can employ to "outthink" his or her brain and stay alive. These include asking for help, keeping emergency contact information handy, creating a crisis plan, keeping a journal, practicing meditation, and attending support groups, to name just a few. The chapter on helping others will be useful for mental health professionals. A resource list includes numerous crisis hotline telephone numbers, web sites, and contact information for support organizations. This vital resource is recommended for all public libraries. Dale Farris, Groves, TX

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### **Review**

"This personal account of what worked for [Blauner] offers excellent practical advice. Approaching suicidal thoughts as an addiction, Blauner clearly explains how some people's "brain style" responds to environmental stresses or "triggers" with obsessive suicidal thoughts rather than cravings for alcohol or other drugs. With neither hollow platitudes nor medical doublespeak, she covers brain function, antidepressants, finding a good therapist, identifying triggers, creating a "Crisis Plan" for critical moments and heading off suicidal thoughts by coping with hunger, anger, loneliness and fatigue. Blauner provides an extremely valuable and much-needed tool for both suicidal thinkers and their loved ones."

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~ *Publishers Weekly*

"In her heartfelt and important book, Blauner offers guidance and hope for those contemplating ending their lives. The bulk of the book consists of her 25 personal "tricks of the trade," practical, safe alternative activities any suicidal thinker can employ to "outthink" his or her brain and stay alive. The chapter on helping others will be useful for mental health professionals. A resource list includes numerous crisis hotline telephone numbers, web sites, and contact information for support organizations. This vital resource is recommended for all public libraries." Dale Farris, Groves, TX

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~ *Library Journal*

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