



This story begins on December 12, 2011, that night around 9 pm my daughter-in-law, Joyce, called to see if I had talked to my son Zachary, I said, “no I had not heard from him.” She shared he had dropped her off at work a few hours before and said he would be back when she got off work at 10 pm. He then sent her a text saying, “I love you very much.”

An hour later, he still had not arrived at her work nor at home. I tried calling him and he was not answering my calls. The police were contacted by Joyce and was told that even though this was not his normal behavior they could not do a missing person until 24 hours had passed. We attempted to talk to Zach’s cellular provider to see where his phone was pinged. The cellular provider told Joyce they cannot give that information out without a court order.

My heart continued to be hopeful considering the barriers we ran into and I continued to call and try to make contact. Pretty soon it was morning, I had not slept a wink of sleep. All night and throughout the morning I was calling and texting him. Still no response.

I knew then there was something wrong and it meant he must be dead. I called my husband and he said, “I’m almost home, dear.” I responded just tell me! just say the words! It was then that he then told me Zach was dead.

I remember that first week when I returned to work, people looked at me like they had no idea what to say to me, like I was a stranger. **ONE** co-worker reached out to see how I was doing. The rest of the staff (who were all trained in mental health) ignored me for at least 3 weeks.

The six months following Zach’s suicide were also a blur. I do remember it was physically exhausting. I would drive to work and stop and take a 20 min nap on the way to and from La Junta. I would also on occasion need to nap at lunch. I was working very hard and it was taking a lot of my energy to go to work. The VP asked me one day in his office if I could do my job. I thought about it over the weekend and realized I needed to find a new job and resigned.

I share Zachary and my story with you all today so you can hear from someone who has lived experience with suicide and I also have lived experience of having a company that I worked at for 3 years suddenly turn their back on me once my son died by suicide. This mental health center showed no support to me. I was not directed to EAP, nor encouraged to take more time off, or made to feel comfort care and concern by many in the organization. I am hopeful the Collaborative’s efforts help organizations want to have a formalized Postvention Plan for employees.

I am hoping this message connects with each of you on how important it becomes to have a plan and perhaps a manager toolkit like the Collaborative’s that will guide you through the process of what to do in a situation like mine.

Lori Stalcar

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