



## Waking Up, Alive

By Richard A. Heckler

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"Sometimes I feel like crying, but the tears just don't come...."

"I had no idea there was a state of mind like this. Everything turned black...."

"It was a zombie place where I just couldn't be a part of anything...."

These are the words of survivors who have lived through one of the most insidious conditions of our time: the desire to die. Five million Americans have attempted suicide. Every seventeen minutes, one of them succeeds. And the numbers continue to grow.

Through fifty startling interviews with suicide survivors of all ages and backgrounds, psychologist Richard A. Heckler takes us into the very heart of despair, documenting the varied paths that lead to that crucial place where one's world seems to stretch, tear, and then break apart. In these intimate accounts we begin to understand the determination and clarity of that fatal choice. But after the failed attempt, healing is possible. For the first time, with great care and penetrating insight, Heckler traces the heroic patterns of recovery. By offering clear, profound portraits of hope, this extraordinary and unprecedented book attests to the resilience of the human spirit, by bearing witness to those who stood at death's door, and found the courage to live.

"It's hard to imagine a hopeful or inspiring book on suicide until you begin reading the astonishing *Waking Up, Alive*."

--San Francisco Chronicle

"In this sensitive book, Richard Heckler brings compassionate light to a shadowy corner of our psyche."

--Ram Dass

Author of *Journey of Awakening*

"These moving accounts, written with a great heart of compassion, have a deeply healing effect on the ocean of human tears. This is a wise and ultimately life-affirming work!"

--Jack Kornfield, Ph.D.

Author of *A Path With Heart*

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Psychology professor Heckler interviewed 50 attempted suicides for this study of the process of emotional recovery in those who have attempted to kill themselves.

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From Library Journal

For the attempter, suicide is a solution. But for the loved ones left behind-and by one conservative estimate at least 3.5 million Americans today are survivors of a loved one's suicide-it is an enigma that has to be solved. Director of the Hakomi Institute of San Francisco and a professor of counseling, Heckler examines the events and experiences of people who have attempted and recovered from a suicide and then gone on to lead rewarding and meaningful lives. The author interviewed 50 such individuals and through a representative selection of stories describes their common experiences of loss and subsequent pain. In a sort of anatomy of recovery, Heckler offers sensitive descriptions for each case and applies much of his knowledge of wellness research to the discussions. With their in-depth view of the cycle of events leading to suicide and the recovery, these poignant stories can move any reader toward greater understanding of the suicidal person. Photographer and former teacher Kuklin (*Speaking Out: Teenagers Take on Race, Sex, and Identity*, Putnam, 1993) focuses on the thoughts and feelings experienced by suicide survivors-defined as not only the person who attempted suicide but also their family and friends. Through a series of vignettes that capture the essence of how each person reacted, two questions asked often by survivors are addressed-Why? and What if? The targeted audience is primarily young adult readers. The issue of suicide is appropriately dealt with on this level by including such related issues as drug and alcohol involvement, responses of classmates and teachers, sexuality, and the stigma of suicide. Other books of merit and interest include George Howe Colt's *The Enigma of Suicide* (LJ 4/15/91), which provides a more comprehensive perspective on all aspects of suicide, and Cynthia Copeland Lewis's *Teen Suicide: Too Young To Die* (Enslow, 1994), which provides more comprehensive coverage for the young adult audience. Still, though neither Heckler nor Kuklin are first-choice selections, they deserve a place in all types of libraries since no one book has yet qualified as the definitive and all-purpose source to the phenomenon of suicide. (Photographs not seen for Kuklin's book.)-Dana L. Brumbelow, Auburn P.L., Ala.

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From Kirkus Reviews

A dramatic demystification of suicide from detailed accounts of failed suicide attempts, their circumstances, and their aftermaths. Therapist and psychology professor Heckler (John F. Kennedy Univ.) interviews 50 people, ranging from teenagers to septuagenarians, mechanics to physicians. What these people share is their ability to live meaningful lives after having failed in their suicide attempts. Heckler opens with an analysis of the most common preludes to suicide. In their own words, his subjects reveal the devastating effects of traumatic loss, extreme family dysfunction, and alienation. As each of their stories unfolds, 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--such as the death of a parent or sexual abuse--that they were not able to mourn: They were experts at putting up a facade. But once this facade could no longer be maintained, many of those interviewed fell into a state that Heckler identifies as the "suicidal trance." At this stage, suicide seems a logical option--almost an imperative. It becomes the only sensible way to both gain control and kill the pain. But when suicide attempts fail, survivors are forced to face the reality of their self-abuse and the crisis that they were trying to "resolve." In addition to grappling with the more recent calamity, Heckler's interviewees underwent a

grieving process in which their original pain finally surfaced and could then be dealt with. "Grieving actually represents the successful beginning of resolving one's past," he writes. The catharsis of their suicide attempts were so powerful, in fact, that many of the survivors have moved on to success in helping and counseling professions. A bibliography and resource list round out the volume. Revealing and inspiring. --  
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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Ryan Young:**

The feeling that you get from *Waking Up, Alive* may be the more deep you rooting the information that hide within the words the more you get serious about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but *Waking Up, Alive* giving you excitement feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in selected way that can be understood by means of anyone who read it because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this *Waking Up, Alive* instantly.

#### **Kelly Cruz:**

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#### **Robert Hansen:**

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