



# The Will To Live Foundation, Inc.

For The Kids, Through The Kids, By The Kids



December 30, 2012

## Are We Trusted Adults?

In October of 2012, for 7 straight days, I spoke about Life Teammates and Suicide Awareness at 7 different venues in the greater Atlanta GA area. 4 of them were local high schools where a “Suicide Awareness Task Force” presentation for the adults of the community was given. This was part of Johns Creek, GA’s Suicide awareness initiative which the Will To Live Foundation helps sponsor.

Each night at each school only 25 or so people came. As a survivor of suicide (My son Will completed suicide in October of 2010), I was asked to be the key note speaker along with a panel of depression, mental health and suicide awareness experts. Each night I said how disappointed I was that more people were not there learning about mental health and what to do and where to go. But I totally understood. All those people who didn’t go were EXACTLY LIKE ME – just two years ago. **“Depression, mental health and certainly suicide was not something I should be concerned about”- that was my approach 2 years ago.** I would not have come to that meeting simply because I didn’t know I needed to. Thus, for all those people who didn’t attend, I’m not angry or upset or even surprised, they are all exactly like me back in September of 2010. I just don’t want them to ever be like me today – missing a loved one lost to suicide. What they don’t know, and what I didn’t know, is that families like mine – The Trautwein Family – are indeed the face of suicide in today’s world. But hope and help is indeed everywhere (just as it was two years ago for me – oh if I had only known)

Thus, I will keep talking and keep spreading our message. What I have learned, and what I want all adults to hear, is that the kids of today need us to understand what they are up against.

“A TRUSTED ADULT ‘KNOWS AND SHOWS!’”

A trusted adult **“knows”** that the world is a much younger place and the opportunities that our kids are presented today bring with them extreme pressures that we adults did not have face until we were much older. An even more importantly, a trusted adult **“shows”** to the kids of today that we understand this fact. What I’ve learned from the experts and from the kids is whether we agree with them or disagree, the kids of today will respond to the adults that they feel understand them.

I always thought that my son Will and I had a great relationship, but to be honest, I don’t know if I ever really “showed” that I understand just how hard life is for a teenager today. I showed that I loved him; I showed that I cared, but I never “showed” that I truly understood that he was facing much more intense issues then I did at his age. Thus I don’t know if Will ever said to his friends “Yeah My Dad Gets Me!” In fact, I fear he didn’t, but maybe someday his brothers and sister will.

**“Yeah My Dad Gets Me”**



Thus, as the WTL Foundation begins its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, I ask all of us to really think hard about this “Knows and Shows” concept. If nothing else it will improve the communication between us and our kids – perhaps it will improve our relationships, and the experts tell me that by showing understanding, it will improve the Will To Live of the kids of this generation.

With Love & Hope,  
John Trautwein  
The Will To Live Foundation