

Dealing With Unimaginable Grief

Amber Henderson lost her sister two years ago and has been trying to heal ever since. *(Story and photo by D. Granillo)*



In 2016, 1,310 people in Arizona committed suicide, but for seventh grader Amber Henderson, the only number that matters is one.

On Wednesday, Oct. 6, 2016, Amber was told by police that her sister, Kyleigh Henderson, had taken her own life.

"I woke up to my brother and sister coming into my room, and a cop followed them in. I was starting to freak out because I couldn't see her, and I had all these things running through my head," Amber said. "We went to my grandma's house, and we sat, for maybe 15 to 25 minutes, and

then a man who says he's the sheriff comes in and says that she had taken her own life that day. I just lost it."

Asking the "What Ifs"

The shadow of grief and constant "what if" questions have haunted Amber since. She said she wonders if words left unsaid could have changed something. She wonders if a different action would change fate completely, yet she is left never knowing what the future could have been.

"After I found out that she was gone, I felt guilty because prior to that she had tried before and I thought that I could have done something more," Amber said. "There were days in the first couple

of years where I wanted to sit in my room and just cry."

Working Through It

Time hasn't healed Amber, but with the support of friends and working herself through it, Amber has slowly begun to accept what happened. Life will never go back to how it was before, but Amber has learned to cope with life without Kyleigh in it.

"It's still tough to talk about, but I feel like with every year that passes it's not easier to deal with, but it's easier to cope with," she said. "I don't think about it as much as I did the first year."

"Now I know that there are people who I can talk to about it and I don't have to feel like I'm just alone with these

feelings."

Years of Bullying

Amber said Kyleigh was bullied in school and online. Even though the depression may have preexisting over the years the words and actions of her classmates followed Kyleigh's every move. Every taunt, every shove, and every social media post was another step leading to her death.

"It's not OK that they did that to her. These types of things happen and it hurts everyone, like the family and the friends," Amber said. "It just hurts everyone and once they are gone, they're gone and they aren't going to come back. It's over. Don't brush it off like it's nothing. Don't act like it's

them overreacting about someone saying something."

Writing to Remember

Amber will never forget the day where she sat in her grandma's house and cried. The moment of sadness still haunts Amber, but she has developed her own way of coping and remembering the sister she loved and cherished.

"I try to remember her as much as possible. When I write my stories I try to give my characters some aspects of her personality," Amber said. "She used to write poems to express her feelings and I do the same thing, but with stories and I just want her to be a part of that."