

## DEAR ADAM

Posted by Contributor | Dec 14, 2016 | Treatises | 0 📍 | ★★★★★



By Pam Munter

Good afternoon.

In your last email, you referred almost casually to having discussed suicide with your therapist. I know this is not a subject new or unfamiliar to you. You and I have talked about it several times before over the years, often under far more urgent circumstances. I appreciate your giving me permission to address this topic with you again, this time with seemingly more time to deliberate. And I value the trust. We've been friends a long time and I know it hasn't always been easy. You and I are very different people with divergent points of view and we've clashed from time to time. On this topic, however, we share common and excruciating experience with melancholia.

Having given this subject matter much thought—both in the abstract and in the real world—I have concluded the most compelling reason not to die by one's own hand is that it is also the death of possibility.

I've never bought the argument that one shouldn't do it because it would hurt or abandon others. The reason many people consider it at all is because of the pathology and cruelty of other people. For me, the actions of others are not much of a reason to make these kinds of decisions. It's not about them. They have responsibility for their own lives. For me, what it comes down to is my relationship with myself. The question is always, can I repair this breach with myself?

### CATEGORIES

Series

Film

Audio

Grand Prize Winners

Narratives

Poetry

Imagery

Treatises

Noise Complaints & Critical Acclaim

Nor have I accepted the cliché (even if I've used it myself from time to time) that suicide is the permanent solution to a temporary problem. It goes without saying that anyone contemplating such an act intends just that result. Many at that point in their lives realize that it isn't merely the situation at hand that has provoked this alternative.

In your case, it's the discouraging repetition of patterns over a lifetime without much progress along the learning curve, isn't it? That, coupled with your lack of sustained interest or willingness in working through your issues, often makes life appear diminished and bleak. Situations seem to occur in isolation without any kind of hierarchy or predictability to them; thus, they puzzle you and seem arbitrary. You had a part in them, of course, but cannot understand what happened. Your defense of choice at such times is detachment, as if distancing yourself could protect you from the pain. You seem to get to the end of Act One with people or events then switch the scenery around in retreat, inviting a version of Freud's famous "repetition compulsion." The close relationships in which you have engaged have a sameness to them, which doesn't seem to either occur to or concern you. You seem to play out the same scenes over and over again, without changing your script or its ending. I know you feel powerless just now.

When things are at their worst, when life piles on, you have no place to go. You haven't cultivated a supportive, reinforcing person inside who can comfort you and lead you out of the quagmire. You lack historical antecedents, a personal emotional research base, that could provide information on what has worked in the past. It would seem easier sometimes to drop the curtain on whatever character and scene that's driving your despair and close down the play for a while. Or perhaps even go dark forever.

Underneath all your stops and starts and creatively dysfunctional relationships, what gets lost in the noise is that you are fundamentally a big-hearted person, altruistic and full of generous impulses. I know there are people you've met along the way who would—if they could—thank you for the benevolent influence you have had on their lives. Shelley comes to mind. There is not a doubt in my mind that she would not have enjoyed her late-life career renaissance were it not for your unrelenting efforts on her behalf. She, too, was ready to throw in life's towel, relegating herself to much less than she really wanted. But you were there for her, helping her find the path toward fulfillment. And now she is in a place she never thought she'd be, on top of the heap. I don't want to go all George Bailey on you here, but to some extent the worth of a person's life is measured by what s/he has given to others, an often unspoken and unappreciated legacy. You have inevitably given of yourself to people who need you to be there, including me. The problem is that you haven't always been there for yourself.

Living takes courage on a daily basis. But so does self-examination. And I mean all of it, not just the selective recollections that reinforce one's mood or immediate point of view. That has never come easily to you. I understand that. That's why it's such a good idea to commit to working on it long term with your therapist before making any decision about ending yourself.

Like you, I've been in some pretty abysmal places emotionally. You already know about many of them because you supported me then. While you and I both know it's really not darkest before the dawn, I can tell you for a fact that the scene can and does change. Even the scenario can be revised (to overuse my theatrical metaphor here). That's where the courageous risk-taking comes in. Once you have sorted out what truly matters to you—and that's sometimes the hard part—it becomes far more likely you will be able to make at least some of that a reality. That's the most important job you have as an existential decision-maker, seems to me. And this sorting process is part of what you're working on with your therapist, I would hope.

Therapy isn't magic, not something done unto you by another person. It requires your total commitment and participation, a willingness to buy into the process and to do the work. As you know, it's another kind of relationship but one that often mirrors the ones you have found most difficult in your life before this. You know, Adam, given half a chance and a little more time, you might even find yourself fascinating.

I don't want to belabor this. I've said enough. You know me well enough to know I would never try to talk you in or out of anything, out of respect for who you are. Clearly, whatever decision you make has to be yours alone. I would only hope that you would take into account all of you and not just the injured and damaged parts. There's always the possibility you could create a life that's fulfilling on many levels, if not perfect. And it's that possibility that counts most of all.

Your friend,  
  
Pam

**WP***signature*

Are You Protected?

**Get Protected with WordPress Esignature**  
Build, track and sign contracts on your site

SHARE:

RATE:

< PREVIOUS

A Scribble

NEXT >

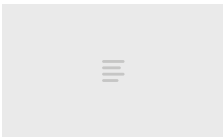
Tony Butt: Oceanographer,  
Patagonia Ambassador,  
Surfer of Mammoth-Sized  
Waves

**Freelance designers...**  
Learn how to use WordPress to get more clients.

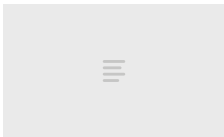
SHOW ME HOW

**approve**  
conditions of use

RELATED POSTS



**Doblad**  
April 20, 2016



**Home on the Highway**  
September 8, 2016



**The Stars Look**



**A Response to the Return of King's article “5 reasons to date a girl with an**