



### D33 Suicide Notes: What Are the Victims Trying to Tell Us?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain knowledge in the motivation of suicide victims. Suicide notes offer the only insight into the mind of the victim. These suicide notes, recovered from actual cases, have been analyzed for theme, content, and demographic information.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by serving as a key aspect into the behavior and thoughts of those committing suicide. It will provide further incite to criminal investigators and medical examiners to aid in the determination of manner of death.

Each day in the United States, between eighty and ninety individuals commit suicide. Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States. For young men between 15 and 24, it is the third leading cause after accidents and homicide. The suicide victim leaves uncounted "victims" that are friends and family who struggle to determine why this happened. Medical professionals have looked to chemical imbalances and brain defects to explain suicide. Criminal investigators and medical examiners labor with lengthy investigations and testing to determine the mindset of the suicide victim so they can conduct an adequate investigation and correct classification for manner of death. The U.S. Military is having an unprecedented number of suicides with the rate rising each of the last four years. This had lead to the U.S. Army developing new programs and studies to help prevent suicides.

A number of studies and theories on suicide indicate that the suicide victim has feelings of hopelessness. They feel that they are a burden on others and society. When they are caught in a personal crisis, their reaction is to end their lives. In the vast majority of cases, the motivation is for suicide will never be known, only about 30-35% of suicide victims leave a note showing their intention.

Suicide notes from actual cases were collected for this research. They were analyzed using a qualitative research method known as "Grounded Theory." This method, developed by Anselm Straus and Juliet Corbin, has been used in sociological research to get to the meanings and themes of dialogues and discourses of individuals. The suicide notes themselves offer the thoughts of the victim at or near the time of death. It is their dying declaration.

This presentation will provide the results of that research. It will provide insight into their behavior and motivation for suicide. Common themes will be revealed of suicide victims and provide investigators information that can be used in determining manner of death.

**Suicide, Notes, Criminal Investigation**