

# Remembering T.J.

## *A Story of Teen Depression, Lessons and Hope*



On December 1, 2010, 16-year-old cherished son, brother, friend, varsity athlete and honor student T.J. Sefcik died by suicide. How could a boy with so much love and potential make this choice? In the hopes of preventing other teens from following the same path, T.J.'s parents, Wendy and Steve, and his 19-year-old brother Matt share T.J.'s story of living with depression. Depression in teens is a common illness; 1-in-8 will suffer at least one depressive episode before reaching adulthood.

This program gives students, parents and educators a view of what teen depression can look like and educates them to pay attention to their mental health and emotions, something that is often pushed to the side. The Sefciks discuss many of the red flags that are often dismissed as typical teenage behavior. Their story gives hope to teens who may be struggling and don't know what to do with how they're feeling. It empowers teens to look outside themselves to their friends and classmates, and gives parents knowledge to help understand their teens a little better.

### **What People Are Saying...**



I want to say thank you for coming to my school because speaking as someone with depression the presentation gave me hope today. So thank you.

— *High school student*

You created openness for us to all talk about things together with friends, with our kids and among co-workers. You touched on things that I took away with me forever and keep repeating in my mind. I will not be afraid. I honestly feel empowered now to a degree to be more aware and understand my children more.

— *Julie Canavatchel, parent*

I can't begin to put into words my appreciation for what your family did for the entire Lazar staff and district visitors at today's presentation. If I heard it once, I heard it a dozen times, "This was the best workshop we ever had." It was passionate, powerful, honest, real, enlightening...the list is endless.

— *Sharon Car, Principal,  
Robert Lazar Middle School, Montville NJ*

For information contact Wendy Sefcik at 908.227.8481 or [wendy@sefcikprod.com](mailto:wendy@sefcikprod.com)  
*There is no fee for this program.*

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## What People Are Saying...

[T.J.'s story] was one of the most important aspects to the course as I discovered, both through emails and through my course evaluations. It really opened up some profound contemplation and conversations with my students and the impact it ultimately has had is beyond my ability to truly measure.

— C. Michael Elavsky, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Penn State University

T.J. occupied every single thought I had on my drive home after your program. As I sat in utter amazement listening to you, Steve and Matt share your story throughout the day, I couldn't help but wonder "How??" How can you speak with such compassion, such love, such sincerity? How can you watch the video, hear the music and open your hearts to allow others to learn? The answer came to me as I drove home... it's T.J.! I truly believe that the energy and spirit of T.J. lives through you to help you save lives. Every quality you each described T.J. as having in life, you all demonstrated in your presentations. I have absolutely no doubt that every person [youth and adult] learned a life lesson Monday.

— Michele Hart-Loughlin, Program Coordinator  
Bergen County Department of Health Services, Division of Mental Health

The message and gift you shared with our students and parents is one that is very rare in today's times. Every time I hear your message, it far surpasses anything I could have hoped to give our students. As I sat and listened to you, Steve and Matt answer questions from concerned parents and students, I was amazed at the warmth, genuineness, and accuracy of each response. More than bringing a program to our school, you are touching lives. I know that your family and T.J. have touched mine in a way that will forever make me a better parent and a better counselor.

— Nancy Systma, Counselor, Bergen County Academies

What you taught our kids and faculty is one of the most important, if not the most important lesson of the year — to seek help and provide support to people living with depression.

— Faith Roncoroni, English Teacher, Phillipsburg School District

I left the forum understanding what my daughter experiences on many occasions. I am now able to understand "her definition" of depression and how it is playing a role in her life. When I arrived home after the discussion this evening, I approached my daughter and said "we have to talk." We shared tears and hugged. She knew I finally "got it." Thank you again for an eye-opening evening.

— Parent, Pompton Lakes High School

The feedback has been pouring in and has been absolutely amazing. I have been a counselor at J&J for 19 years and have NEVER received such favorable and plentiful feedback for any other program. Your words, your pictures, your sharing of knowledge, your sharing of such sensitive and personal issues was felt and loved by all.

— Cheryl Hoyt, LSW, MSW, Johnson & Johnson Employee Assistance Program

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