



To My Good Friends,

I'm glad you're here. I wish it didn't have to be for this, but I wouldn't want to do this without you. My parents are happy to see you too, and they're proud to have your help today. I can't imagine what this is like for them, or for you. But I know it's not easy.

There are a couple things I need you to know about my life, and the first one is that I love you. I managed to tell a few people before now, but maybe I never told you. If you didn't hear me say it, I promise it's true, and someday I would have let you know. It might as well be today. You meant everything to me.

I'm telling you this because it's the most important thing. I don't know how long it would have taken me to realize that. Don't wait another day to realize it yourself. Love is the only thing that matters.

What happened to me was the worst kind of luck. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But you need to know that we make our own luck, all of us. We make bad choices, and I made some that day. I made some before that, too. I'm not telling you anything you don't know. You've been there. You've been with me.

These things we do, the drinking and the drugs, they're part of the problem. Some people will tell you they are the only problem we have. You know that's not true. We're lonely. We're scared. We're angry. We don't know who we are or who we want to be. Those are the real problems, and sometimes the drinks and the drugs feel like solutions. That's how messed up this is.

You know how I died, and you know how I lived. What no one knows is if I would have found my way through all the wrong choices and back to the right ones. It doesn't make any difference to me now. But if you're reading this, you can still make a difference for yourself or someone we know.

A couple weeks ago I left a note on my mom's desk at work: "*I missed you yesterday when you left early. I want to talk to you about some stuff.*" We talked but not enough. I didn't tell her everything I wanted to. I didn't tell her what she needed to know.

Go talk to your parents. Tell them everything. Tell them you love them, and let them help you. There is nothing on Earth more precious to them than you.

Love,

*Dusty*

**Resources For Drug Addiction:**

- 1) The Tau Center at Our Lady of the Lake 225-765 6005  
<http://www.ololrnc.com/body.cfm?id=127>
- 2) Capital Area Recovery Program 225-922-3169  
<http://www.cahsd.org>
- 3) The Louisiana Health and Rehab Center 225-343-3438  
<http://www.lahealthandrehab.org>
- 4) The O'brien House 225-344-6345  
<http://www.obrienhouse.org>

**For Immediate Mental Health Support:**

- 1) The COPE line at Our Lady of the Lake 225-765-8900
- 2) The Crisis Intervention Center 225-924-3900

**What To Look For In Substance Abusers:**

- 1) Obvious signs of intoxication or impairment
- 2) Change in behavior, particularly with regard to being responsible and organized (e.g., worsening grades)
- 3) Change in attitude; increased rebelliousness
- 4) Social withdrawal; although it may be normal for teens to become somewhat more private, it is NOT normal for them to become withdrawn socially.
- 5) Association with other troubled individuals

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