

A year ago March, while I was living in Michigan, I took an overdose of Elavil. I was seeing a psychiatrist and I was just getting off the medication. But the bottle was still in my apartment. I'd one out and had drinks, came home and that's when I did it -- about ten in the evening or so. I called my boyfriend Jonathan in California and my social worker. I told them I had taken the pills. The social worker told me to drive to the emergency room. I'd have been lucky to make it to the front door. Jonathan called a friend of mine, who came to the apartment and broke down the door. I was in a coma for five days. I guess I was lucky because the doctors told everybody I wasn't going to make it. Then they said I've have permanent brain damage. When it didn't happen they said it was the miracle of the floor. I was out of the hospital in about three weeks; a week of that was in the psychiatric ward, which was a real drag.

I had a lot of problems with my memory for a while. Even now I can't remember some things. Starting a week before the overdose I don't remember anything at all. All I know about it is what Jonathan says I told him over the phone. Everybody asks "Why did you do it?" and I don't know. It sounds real stupid.

Everybody in the hospital was real nice. I was afraid that they would get down on me but they didn't. It was a Catholic hospital, and I had my own room. Friends were there 24 hours a day. It made me realize how many friends I had. On the psychiatric ward they give you tests for brain damage. They ask you a lot of silly questions. They test your reflexes, your memory. They give you EKG tests. It took a while to get back my coordination. I couldn't write or do other things with my hands. Most of the time I stayed by myself. There were programs for the other patients but they didn't put me in any because they didn't know how long I would be staying.

I'd tried twice, but those times weren't serious. I was just trying to get some attention. The first time I was 14, and I slashed my wrists. It was basic adolescent scare tactics. As a result I ended up in an inpatient clinic for teenagers for about five months. Almost everybody there was there because they ran away or they were doing a lot of drugs. The second time was a couple of years ago. I did a Valium overdose. It wasn't very serious -- I just had to have my stomach pumped.

This time it shocked me to realize what could have happened to me. I realized how much I had hurt my friends and family, which I didn't think about before. I started wondering if people could trust me. It upset my life a lot -- it threw everything backwards. Jonathan flew in from California. HE said the scariest part was worrying about having to decide what to do if my body kept living but I had no brain response. When I first woke up I didn't think there would be anything wrong with me. And then it hit me that I couldn't move. I was embarrassed that people had to see me like that.

Once you're out of the hospital a lot of institutions won't hire you. You can't get health insurance. You have to lie on your job applications. People look at you like you're dangerous. It's real scary for some of my friends -- they think they're responsible. Trying to convince people that I was OK was the hardest thing. That they didn't have to watch over me, that I wasn't going to try it again.