

Breaking the Silence



with [The Code Green Campaign](#)

That sinking feeling when the tones go off

An EMS provider's struggle with anxiety, sleepless nights and despair

Jan 10, 2020

Editor's Note:

This story is reprinted with permission from [The Code Green Campaign](#). Code Green accepts stories from EMS providers, firefighters, dispatch personnel and law enforcement officers who have experienced stress, trauma or mental health issues.

We share these stories so that other first responders who are struggling can see they are not alone and that there is hope, and help, available. [Submit your own story to The Code Green Campaign today.](#)

My friend asked me if I was OK ... and I instinctively answered: "I'm fine." It's second nature to me, because I am. I'm always fine ... I have to be. But immediately after I realized ... I'm not fine, I'm not OK at all. I can't even remember the last time I felt normal. Today is the first day I realized I'm not OK.

That my sadness it finally taking over. It's another sleepless night, and I find myself thinking about everything I could have done. I find myself remembering the anxiety I get from hearing the sirens and seeing the lights ... something that once brought me so much peace and excitement. Today I remember the feeling I got from hearing the tones go off for another call ... and praying it was some BS call, nothing really serious.

God, I used to be so excited with crazy calls ... and now I pray for the ones that don't require me to think. The ones that require me to just put the pt on the gurney and take them to the hospital. I do everything I'm supposed to. I'm seeing a therapist, I talk to my friends, I don't lie about my feelings ... yet it's not working.

I'm not suicidal. Really, I'm not. But sometimes late at night, I contemplate how much easier it would be to give up, and give in to this utter despair. I don't see suicide as a means to an end ... but as a glowing exit sign ... an exit sign that I truly don't want ... but still, find myself thinking about. It never ends.

This sadness, this loneliness ... this slowly sinking feeling that I can't handle it anymore. I will myself to fight. Every day ... and every night. I lie to myself that it will get better, and maybe it will. For a while. But then it's back. And I hurt all over again. and I just want it to end ... and once again, I fight it, and keep fighting ... because fighting is all I have left to do.

— Story written by KC, 23-year-old first responder, 3 years on the job

About the author

The Code Green Campaign calls a 'code alert' on the mental health of EMTs and paramedics by breaking the silence about mental illness in EMS by sharing the stories of those who have been there. The Code Green Campaign has selected this story and we are glad to share it with EMS1 readers. Learn more about the [Code Green Campaign](#).

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