



# High Country

## If I Should Choose To Die Today

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the tart satisfaction of a grudge held so long  
it still sets my teeth on edge years after the reason for its being is forgotten.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the exquisite pain of holding tight to musty fur,  
burying my face deep against familiarity as my best friend crosses over the Rainbow Bridge.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the silken courage piercing my soul as I dare once more to scoop up the wriggly squiggly  
ball of furry warmth and milky breath destined to become my next best friend.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the sweet sorrow of mourning the integrity of my body as it,  
along with my favorite t-shirt, fades slowly into the past.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the beauty of my frozen smiled pride held taut through the toe curling eternity of my  
niece's fifth grade dance recital.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the resultant power of my exuberant clapping, foot stomping and wild cheering set  
brazenly against the polite applause of society's ignorant abashment.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the freedom of throwing off my cloak of conformity to stomp through muddy puddles  
with the pure abandon of my five year-old, wellie bootied self.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know of humour's jolt, the dichotomy of naiveté against sophistication which perches me  
enticingly on threshold's brink before I tumble down into laughter.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will no longer know the pain and joy of intimate connection, the innate truth in being daughter, sister, auntie,  
wife, friend in shared celebration of life's humanity.

If I should choose to die today.  
I will never know the grief of my own loss, the rend in the tapestry of life that no amount of skillful sewing can  
ever repair.

And ultimately, perhaps, this will be the true shame of it all  
If I should choose to die today.

**-Justin Mikel  
NAMI High Country Board  
Member**



**How do you RELAX?  
Relaxation is an important part of coping  
with life's challenges... here's how some of  
our board members relax...**



**Sarah...**

1. Listening to audiobook versions of favorite childhood novels. Re-entering some world I got lost in as a kid takes my attention off my own world and worries. And Jim Dale's voice reading Harry Potter can lull me to sleep.
2. Driving. Something about being alone in my car feels safe, and something about the physical act of driving is soothing.
3. Deep breathing. Lying flat in bed under soft blankets, relaxing my body from the feet up, then breathing in for a count of five, holding for a count of five, and breathing out for a count of five.
4. Tending my plants and loving my kitten.

**Sharon...**

Hike; hang out and cook with friends; fill my mind with positive, affirming truths through devotions, books, movies and quotes; pray and give my concerns to God.

**Alison...**

1. Not working! My job is stressful, so I love my time off.
2. Massage- My favorite but I only go every once in a while because it is expensive.
3. Bike ride- It takes a while to load the bike and drive to a safe location to ride, but I always feel better when I make the effort.
4. Netflix- I love to watch bad sci fi
5. Reading- It has to be a book where I can not tell what will happen next.
6. Music- I can unwind with music at work.

**Caroline...**

Go hang out at a coffee shop, walk around a library, blog, talk with a friend, and bake.

**Genevieve...**

- 1) Pet our cats & hang out with animals
- 2) Sing to myself or someone else

- 3) Drink a cup of chamomile tea
- 4) Walk on a beautiful path or walk with my son or a friend

**Laura Anne...**

Belly breathing and mindfulness. I focus on what I can hear and feel. I can get my heartrate ridiculously low doing this!

**Joe...**

- 1) Exercise - Maybe not "relaxing" in the conventional sense, exercise allows me to focus entirely on one thing at a time - my body. As I complete any movement I am aware of my form, my muscles & joints, the count of repetitions. When I'm exercising, I'm in my own mind, relaxing with an absence of stress and worry.
- 2) Cell Phone Games - Although quite addicting, I have found that some puzzle and strategy games can be very distracting and relaxing. When I'm feeling anxious or tense, I will pull out my phone and play my favorite game Border Siege (a Risk clone for the Android). I get immersed in the strategy and lose myself in it long enough to distance from the distress that may be crippling my thoughts.
- 3) Mindfulness Bell - Another smartphone app, this little gong can be set to randomly play at set intervals during the time you tell it to. I listen for this bell and every time I hear it, I genuinely pause what I'm doing and contemplate about where I am and how I feel for a moment. It's very grounding and I have found that it has become something I look forward to throughout the day.

**Next Meeting**

**Music and Recovery**

**Monday, August 4 at 7pm**

Come listen to local musicians/NAMI Members who have struggled with mental health challenges. Hear them play and hear how music has helped their recovery!

Our meetings are in the Watauga County Public Library conference room. Watauga County Public Library in downtown Boone is located at 140 Queen Street, behind Mast General Store. If you get there before 7pm you will be able to go in the main door. After that we will enter and exit through the side door.