

# Student Alex Hagen's Suicide Note

## Christopher Newport University, 16Oct2018

Review by Kevin R. Strauss, M.E.

URL: <https://www.everydaydevotional.com/blog/obituary-sophomore-alex-hagen-and-junior-george-grekos-christopher-newport-university/>

### Preface

*Given the number of suicides in the world, it's still rare to have the opportunity to read a note written by the individual. While society often believes suicide is the result of mental illness and is also "unexplainable", I do not believe this to be true. In the case of Alex Hagen, I believe he tells us exactly what his pain is and why he chose to end his life on October 16, 2018.*

*In the following review, I have highlighted Alex's words according to the following definitions, which I prefer:*

- **Mental Health – A person's ability to think clearly, focus, concentrate and perform cognitive tasks.**
- **Emotional Health – A person's ability to give and receive love, belonging and connection.**
- **Spiritual Health – A person's ability to know, understand and pursue their purpose.**

*Based on the definitions above, I do not believe Alex was mentally ill or even in poor mental health. I believe he was in extreme emotional pain (i.e. poor emotional health) because he never felt like he belonged; he didn't feel truly connected to others. Further, he struggled to identify his purpose or meaning in life (i.e. poor spiritual health). Feeling like you don't belong and not knowing your purpose are NOT mental illnesses.*

*How am I qualified to review Alex's note? First and foremost, I am a human being who values life and it pains me to know anyone is suffering. The pain I see so much of society experiencing is emotional pain and I'd like to change that for all of humanity. Pain is a difficult topic because everyone's experience is different. Physical pain is well accepted in society but emotional (and mental) pain is still stigmatized and oftentimes considered a weakness. We need to have these difficult conversations if we're ever going to improve and thrive as a species. Perhaps we can learn from Alex's pain since he has chosen to share it with us. Thank you Alex, we'll try.*

*My formal background is biomedical engineering and my 25+ year career has focused on problem solving. I believe my success comes from understanding the root cause of a problem because then I have found solutions to be much easier to conceive. Using this approach and with the help of others, I have earned 74 invention patents, 10+ publications across four industries including behavior modification and psychology, and two industry awards for innovation.*

*During my career I spent eight years conducting NIH funded research focused on behavior modification. This led to an interest and passion in understanding "What drives behavior?".*

*What I have come to conclude over the past 17 years of investigation, and that which is supported by research, is connection and relationships (i.e. our state of emotional health), more than anything else, are the primary drivers of human behavior especially once our basic needs for survival have been met (i.e. food, water, shelter and safety).*

*My mission now is to help people connect authentically with those who matter most to them and I do this using today's technology. Through formal, peer-reviewed research, published in a Journal of Psychology, we have shown an online activity CAN strengthen relationships and connections with additional data showing that its use improves the feelings of depression, just one of many behaviors/symptoms of not feeling a sense of love, connection and belonging.*

*Emotional health is critical for our species to thrive because without it we are self-destructing, through our behaviors, by hurting ourselves and others. The evidence is all around us in our everyday behaviors and specifically in Alex's. We know many others feel EXACTLY as you do Alex and if we listen carefully and pay attention, we'll hear you and them.*

*Kevin R. Strauss, M.E.  
Wellness & Emotional Health Specialist*

In Alex's words...

Peace

If you are reading this, I am dead. I am writing this to let everyone know it's okay, this is what I wanted. First and foremost, **this was not an impulsive decision. I gave this much thought** and concluded that this would be better than struggling through life. I decided in early September that life is not worth living on. **I don't believe I belong here.** Hopefully there is something greater awaiting me once I go down. I hope to see some of you down the road if that is possible. No one is responsible and no one could have seen this coming. **I have done my best to hide it, plan it, and execute it.** If I wanted help I would have sought it. I pretended everything was okay. This last month **I have spent a lot of time thinking** instead of trying to better myself for the future. **It seems every time things are going good, something goes wrong.** There is no one to blame but me for this incident.

To simply answer "Why would you do this?", you can't. There is no simple answer, it's a complex mixture of factors and circumstances and feelings that mix in together. I have been on and off **depressed since I was 12.** It comes and goes in waves. Yesterday, September 3rd, I went out to get some air and think about a random thought that came into my head. "Why are you still here, Alex?", I asked myself. **The more I thought about it,** the more I realized I really didn't want to be on this planet anymore. **Happiness seems to be something everyone else but me can achieve.** I know maybe one day I could achieve it, but by that time I think I would be almost dead anyway. **Life is wake up, go to class/work, eat, go home and chill.** Once in a while do something different, but for the most part it's a repetitive boring exhausting cycle. I don't have the energy or motivation to graduate, work for 40 years, then die. I am not lazy, though some

may construe it that way. Depression makes that uphill battle harder than people realize. Kudos to those who are able to triumph through that. However I am ready now to make it to the afterlife, emptiness, or whatever comes next. Bring it on.

Christopher Newport University. You are a great school. The people are nice, the campus is nice, the food is great, and the classes and professors for the most part are good. You will move on and find another sucker to pay 25 thousand a year to get a degree (half or most of it is obtained by doing stuff you'll never use) so they can get a job, work 40 years, then die. Mostly in debt, but that's not your fault, it's the way things are. I want y'all to know I am not stressed by the workload or upset by anything about you. It is a deeper issue. I know as soon as I complete my mission, you will send out some letter and set up some sort of mental health awareness campaign or whatever. Some people I probably don't know the names of will say "Oh what a nice good guy Alex was, why would he do this he seemed so happy". Don't even bother, just move on have a great year. I appreciate all the people who make CNU what CNU is. Keep up the great work. Murray High School. You are also a great school. I loved my time there. The people and way things were were great. Keep it up and continue your work. You save a lot of people. I knew all the teachers pretty well, and you all are all stars. Honestly, you delayed the inevitable.

Life. A 4 letter word. What does it mean? I don't really care. It's something I don't want to be apart of, and something I haven't really ever wanted to be apart of. The seemingless pointless point to life and struggles everyone seems to experience has never really made me think about life in a positive way. It's just a daily struggle to better yourself, and it's something I have neglected to do for a long time. My energy levels and motivations have always been very low, it's a miracle I have made it to this point. I have never fit in to society, I have always been shy and awkward. Talking to people was never my forte. Everyone was always 2 steps ahead of me. My social intelligence is poor. However somehow this gave me a great skill of being able to understand people. I couldn't manage to put my thoughts into words, so I just stayed silent. I was always thinking, never saying. I am tired of this. The way I am cannot be changed. It's so tiring and frustrating to not manage anything but a hello.

The high points and things that made me happy is a short list. I appreciate all of it so much for giving me something to do to make me not miserable. Frisbee, my family, sports, games, food, and TV. Ultimate Frisbee is a great sport that I love to play. Sports have always brought me joy and something to follow, do, or watch. Football and Basketball in particular are exciting to watch. Video games also are nice to play. I have never really been great at them, but I always found them fun to play and experience. Food is great. Good invention. Friends are hard to come by when you are like me, but the few friends I have managed to make I appreciate. To Michael, Darius, Jack, Colton, Will, and Finley. Y'all were the ones who have been closest to me at one point or another. We shared a lot of good times, and I want you to remember those times. Live good lives.

To anyone who is going through something similar, who doesn't see the point of life or want to live through it, I have this to say to you. Before you make a decision so big or drastic, think

about what you could do to better yourself. **Really think about your decision and who and what it affects.** If you have thought about it and have been struggling for years and your life isn't satisfying you, then make your plans. I know that may sound controversial, but honestly I believe their free will outweighs your wishes. Rather than struggle through life, I have terminated mine early. I think others have the right to do the same. If you know me, you know I am an individualist who emphasizes the individual way of life. **Let people live how they want as long as it doesn't infringe on another person's way to live.** There are a lot of gray areas to this statement, but you are adults you can figure it out civilly and peacefully.

I wanted to go into Law Enforcement as a career. **I wanted to help people and stop bad people from doing bad things or punishing them for it.** I don't think it would have made me happy, but it probably would have made me feel a little better. **I honestly can't say what would make me happy, because I have never truly been happy before.** To all the people who work in law enforcement, keep up the good work, don't let the media or anyone put you down. I know most of you are great people.

I have learned to let go of hate years ago. I don't hate anyone. I know everyone is living their own life. Some people are jerks, some people are really nice. It's how it is. I like to believe most people are nice. I hope that is the case. **Through my life, I may have been viewed as a quiet strange kid and I knew that more than anybody. But you know what? That's okay. That's who I was.** I know I was probably judged for it, but that's okay. **I urge you not to judge anyone for anything** besides the content of their character. That is all that actually matters. Most people who are suicidal will either triumph through it or struggle through their life. I don't want to be the latter. I know a few people will be hurt by my decision, and I really am sorry, **but you can forget about me. I was never that important or crucial to your life.**

This is crazy. 19 years of living. 19 years of good times, bad times, and everything in-between. It will be over in one pull of the trigger. That is insane. 1 split second and I am gone. **I feel bad for the people who have to deal with the aftermath.** Most people will forget about it in a few weeks or months. A few people will have to deal with it everyday for a long time.

I am really sorry, I wish it could be different but I just can't anymore. And don't blame yourselves, there's nothing you could have done. **I put my mind to this task, I will not fail.** I know you may not think this makes sense or think it's stupid, but not to me. **My mission is over and this paper is too.** I think I have said all I need to say. I have never been good at conclusions. I wish everyone good luck. Just know I am at peace now, and that is what matters. I have no regrets for what I am about to do. Good Bye.