

*Uncovering God's Plan  
to Restore Your Mental Health*

# *Stay Here*



Jacob Coyne

*Foreword by Nick Vujicic*

“One of the greatest joys of my life is seeing the brokenhearted discover freedom and healing. For that reason, I am very excited for the release of *Stay Here*. Author Jacob Coyne’s passion and anointing are evident throughout this wonderful book. I love the brilliant combination of biblical insights from Scripture and real-life stories of redemption. *Stay Here* will equip many to access the healing power and fullness of life that are promised to every person through Jesus.”

Bill Johnson, senior leader of Bethel Church, Redding, CA,  
and author of *Born for Significance* and *God is Good*

“I am grateful for Jacob’s friendship, commitment to the gospel, and the mission of *Stay Here*. This part of the book really needs to be shouted from the rooftops: ‘It’s okay to not to be okay, but it’s not okay to stay that way.’ I’m glad that I chose to not stay that way; I’m glad that I chose to stay here.”

Joshua Broome, co-founder of Share the King;  
husband, father, preacher, and author

“Suicide is a modern-day plague that has stained an entire generation. I have met countless students who have attempted suicide, and countless more who know friends whose stories ended too soon. In *Stay Here*, my friend Jacob Coyne writes a call to action that all of us can be part of. Whether this is part of your story or not, I can assure you it has touched every teenager and twentysomething you know. Read this book as a lifeline. Read it to understand. Read this to join a movement of those standing in the gap for this generation to STAY HERE!”

Nick Hall, evangelist and founder of Pulse  
and the Together movement

“For too long, many have remained silent about the battle taking place in countless lives. That is why *Stay Here* is such a needed message. My friend Jacob Coyne shares with authenticity and authority about the impact of mental health, suicide, and the hope that is available to every person through Jesus.”

Tyler Sollie, Life Center Church

“*Stay Here* by Jacob Coyne is a powerful book that exposes the lies of suicide and offers help to anyone who has struggled with their mental health. With honesty and compassion, Jacob shares his own journey of overcoming depression and finding hope in Christ. This book is a must-read for anyone seeking to overcome the darkness of suicidal thoughts and discover the light of hope and healing.”

Pastor Mike Signorelli, lead pastor of V1 Church

“There is no one I know with a more anointed and authoritative message around setting Gen Z free from suicide and depression than Jacob Coyne. This book is timely, powerful, and needed.”

Grant Skeldon, Next Gen director at THINQ;  
author of *The Passion Generation*

“Jacob Coyne and Stay Here are leading the way in lifting a spirit of death off an entire generation. In a world where suicide rates are ever on the rise, *Stay Here* offers a message of hope and healing for all those fighting against the darkness of anxiety, depression, and despair. At the turn of every page, we hear echoes of the Savior Himself: ‘I have come that they may have LIFE, and life to the full.’”

Colby Maier, pastor of Bloom church

“There are few people I admire as much as my brother Jacob. His heart to see generations free from suicide and mental health issues is provoking. I know his book *Stay Here* will bring freedom to the heart of every reader. A mental health revival is on the horizon.”

Jonah Coyne, co-founder of Stay Here and central  
student pastor of Gateway Church

“In *Stay Here*, Jacob gives us a needed message for this generation. He has a unique way of confronting the reality of the challenges we face while standing firm in the hope of Jesus. I can’t encourage you enough to read this book and buy it for others. It is transformational.”

Jessika Tate, founder and president of Yielded Ministries

“Jacob’s message is the way through anxiety and depression. It’s okay not to be okay, but you don’t have to stay that way. I find so much hope in the pages of this book, and you can too.”

Rebekah Lyons, bestselling author of *Rhythms of Renewal*

“Jacob Coyne is one of our generation’s greatest encouragers on the topic of soul care and mental health. ‘Stay here’ is his life message, and throughout this book, you’ll discover that Jesus sees your internal struggle more clearly than anyone, yet he loves you more than anyone.”

Judah Smith, lead pastor of Churchhome

“It’s concerning to witness the mental health crisis that has engulfed a generation. Social media and constant comparison have left them grappling with negative effects. They’ve been crying for help, but we’ve been ignoring their pleas for too long. Thankfully, Jacob has stepped up with a powerful message—Stay here!—reminding them of their significance. It’s time for us to act, and I am deeply grateful that this book inspires us to do so.”

Becky Johnson, executive pastor of Jesus Culture Sacramento

*Stay Here*

# *Stay Here*

*Uncovering God's Plan  
to Restore Your Mental Health*



Jacob Coyne



**Chosen**

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

© 2023 by Jacob Coyne

Published by Chosen Books  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
www.chosenbooks.com

Chosen Books is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

ISBN 978-0-8007-6356-5 (trade paper)  
ISBN 978-1-4934-4254-6 (ebook)  
ISBN 978-0-8007-3000-0 (casebound)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023010163

Unless otherwise identified, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2016

Scripture quotations identified CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations identified GNT are from the Good News Translation in Today's English Version-Second Edition. Copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations identified NIV are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations identified NKJV are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations identified NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations identified KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Baker Publishing Group publications use paper produced from sustainable forestry practices and post-consumer waste whenever possible.

23 24 25 26 27 28 29      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my wife, Mariah:  
Thank you for staying with me  
through my darkest nights.  
Your love and prayers  
helped pull me through.  
I love you so much.

To my family:  
Together, we're turning  
our pain into purpose,  
and it's changing thousands of lives.  
I couldn't do this without you.

To anyone struggling with  
finding reasons to keep going:  
I pray this book will be your sign to live.

In memory of Greg Sweet,  
my uncle and incredible friend.

# Contents

Foreword by Nick Vujicic	11
1. This Is Your Sign to Live	15
2. The Way Is Through	27
3. It's Okay to Not Be Okay, but It's Not Okay to Stay That Way	41
4. How Free Do You Want to Be?	61
5. When Anxiety Attacks	79
6. Tired of Being Tired	95
7. The Prison Cell of Anger	109
8. Stuck in the Loop of Stinking Thinking	119
9. Jesus Can Heal Your Trauma	133
10. Gen Z Will Be Suicide Free	143
Personal Prayer Starters	159
Stay Here Resources	165
Acknowledgments	167
Notes	169



# Foreword

Growing up, I could not imagine living my whole life without arms and legs. I didn't understand why God would allow me to be born this way. I worried that I would never be able to have a job or be independent. I assumed having a wife and my own family was not in the cards for me. So many fears plagued my mind. The bullying I faced and the fear of being alone kept me in a dark depression and brought me to a suicide attempt when I was just ten years old. At that time, I did not think I could live without arms and legs.

If you told me back then the ways that God was going to use my life, I would not have believed you. Today, I have a beautiful wife and four amazing children. I've traveled the world, and God has given me platforms to inspire and encourage millions of brokenhearted people. I have had the privilege of meeting with presidents and leaders of nations. Despite the challenges I have faced, God has been faithful to turn my pain into purpose.

If you have battled with mental health, I want you to know that you're not alone. Maybe you've thought about suicide or even attempted it. But the fact that you decided to open this book tells me that you haven't given up. You have chosen to keep fighting for today because deep down, you know you were created for a greater purpose. Maybe you haven't seen what that purpose is yet, but something in your heart tells you there is more. I want you to know that I am proud of you.

I gave my life to Christ at the age of fifteen. I asked God to give me arms and legs, but I also decided that even if He didn't, I needed Him to rescue me from the two biggest disabilities: sin and death. Even if I didn't get the miracle I was hoping for, I asked Him to help me be a miracle for someone else. I wanted my life to mean something. I could have stayed angry and bitter about my circumstances and taken matters into my own hands, but that would have led to a life much less than the purpose God intended. Or worse, I could have ended my life. But let my story be evidence to you that when we give God our brokenness, He always makes something beautiful.

God has dreams for you better than anything you have imagined. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (NIV). If you are overwhelmed about your life, remember these words. I used to worry about my future without arms and legs. Looking back, I can see that God always had my best interests in mind. We don't have to know the whole

plan. Trust that God has given you everything you need for today to take the next step.

I recently had the chance to interview Jacob Coyne for our Champions for the Brokenhearted series. It is evident that Jacob carries the burden of our heavenly Father to see Gen Z (and the generations that come after) live. I believe that he is a trailblazer for this generation to find their true identity in Christ. I pray that as you read this book, you will see the truth about who God says you are, and see His heart for you. I do not know what you have been through, but I know the God who does. You may not be able to see anything from where you are right now, but keep going. There are others, like Jacob, who have been through the dark valley and are standing strong on the other side, cheering you on. Keep fighting the good fight of faith. What is crushing you right now can become a powerful testimony that changes the world! I implore you today to choose life. Take one day at a time. You are an overcomer. You have a great story to tell. I love you, and I believe in you. Stay here!

— Nick Vujicic, founder of Life Without Limbs ministry

# 1



## *This Is Your Sign to Live*

Our world is in the middle of a mental health crisis. Anxiety, depression, and suicide rates are at all-time highs. Let me put it to you this way: As of this writing, every forty seconds, someone takes their own life. That means that by the time you're done reading this chapter, more than twenty people will have died by suicide.<sup>1</sup> And if you were to read this book from cover to cover in one sitting, 9,756 people would have taken their own lives around the globe during that time.<sup>2</sup>

These aren't just nameless, faceless statistics. These are people—your friends and neighbors at school, work, and church. Twelve-year-olds, seventeen-year-olds, and thirty-four-year-olds. High school class presidents. Athletes and artists. Daughters and sons. And they matter.

Does it break your heart to watch this happen to your generation—to any generation? Does it hurt when you see this? It should, because this is not the way things are meant to be. If we have breath in our lungs, if our heart is beating, we matter to God. He is a God of life, and He has destined every soul on this planet to physically live this life to the fullest. Do you believe that?

How do I know this is true? Because the Bible says God desires that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9). None means zero. We're all intended to know the heart of God, our heavenly Father, and His heart wants us all to know the love of Jesus Christ.

In this book I'll ask you some challenging questions to propel you not only to seek and find healing for your own soul but to then bring healing to the brokenhearted all around you. Your generation depends on you to live and bring life to the hardest and darkest places. Because if not you, then who? And if not now, then when? If you're a teenager, who else will bring Jesus to your school or college? Who else will pray for your friends? Will you do it? We must. We are the last line of defense for the broken.

The Bible tells us the enemy has come to steal, kill, and destroy, and I know the world seems dark and hopeless all around us. But I have good news from that same passage in Scripture. Jesus Christ is shouting loud and clear, "I have come to bring life and life to the fullest!" (John 10:10, paraphrased).

I long to see self-hatred, self-harm, and certainly anxiety, depression, and suicide lifted off our world, especially among the younger generations. Though suicide may cur-

rently be the second leading cause of death around the globe, here's more good news: it's the most preventable cause of death. So what's keeping us from preventing it? What's keeping us from ending this epidemic? It's been inaction, it's been our silence, and it's been our lack of prayer.

## **This Ends Now**

I ask you to join me in saying “This ends now.” We will pray. We will take action. We will reach out. We will share the good news of Jesus that saves broken and hurting souls. Jesus is with us in this battle, and we will win.

Here is a story to encourage you, to let those of you who need a sign to live know that there is always hope, and to let those of you ready to fight the battle for others know it's easier to save someone from suicide than you think.

In 2020, I started a nonprofit mental health organization called Stay Here, and we came up with a wild and bold vision: *Gen Z will be suicide free*. (Gen Z's age range is anyone born from 1996 to 2012.) Our organization spreads awareness through our clothing line, and we offer a crisis chat line, counseling, and free suicide prevention training and certification online.

In 2021, we came out with T-shirts emblazoned with our vision statement—*Gen Z will be suicide free*—in bold red ink. A friend named Jocelyn wore one of these shirts to a Seattle Mariners baseball game, and little did she know that a nineteen-year-old young woman there was planning to kill herself that very night, after the game. But she'd bought a ticket to this event literally hoping to find *a sign to live*.

Somehow, by the providence of God and in the midst of thousands of people, the two crossed paths, and the message on Jocelyn's T-shirt stopped this hurting soul in her tracks. She walked up to Jocelyn and asked, "What is this shirt all about? What does it mean?" Jocelyn told her about the gospel of Jesus Christ, and after one conversation, this teenager said, "I was going to kill myself tonight, but this is my sign to live."

Maybe you're hurting and battling suicidal thoughts just like that young woman was. You might be thinking you're all alone in your storm and beyond saving. But again, I'm telling you there's hope. Someone has been reading your journal entries. Someone has seen you in your lowest moments alone in your bedroom. His name is Jesus, and He's here to set you free.

Let this book be your sign to live. My prayer is that you will find the healing and freedom you've been desperately crying out for, you'll experience wholeness, and you'll even become a sign to live for others around you. If you're a follower of Jesus, you carry the resurrection life of Jesus in your veins. You will not die; you will live. And you will tell the world about what God has done in your life.

I will fight for the born who wish they had not been born.

I will fight for the living who wish they were dead.

I will fight for the breathing who wish they were without breath.

Let me fight for you as you read these pages, and then, when you're ready, please join me in the fight for your generation.

## **How I Got Here**

Let me tell you how I got into this fight in the first place. Few people wake up one morning and say, “I think my calling in life is to stop suicide.” But suicide is a heavy topic, and I was led to this place because heavy things happened to me and around me. Oftentimes our deepest pain can lead us into our purpose, and soon it became an injustice for me to keep sitting around without taking action.

A few years ago, my uncle Greg Sweet took his own life. Greg wasn't just a relative I saw only during the holidays. He was a father figure and a mentor to me. He was also a father to his four incredible girls. Greg always took the spotlight in any room he walked into. He was loud, joyful, an includer, and a lover of anything that required risk. He possessed a deep love for God and constantly sang worship songs in a '90s-grunge sort of style.

Unfortunately, Greg was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, and it took a great toll on his go-getter lifestyle. After he'd battled the illness for about six years, it began to affect his mind as well as his body. And then, unexpectedly, he took his own life in the late summer of 2015.

Saying goodbye to Greg in the hospital was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. On many days memories of him come to mind, causing my eyes to quickly fill with tears. My uncle never got to meet my three daughters. He isn't here to cheer me on like he used to. It hurts. Greg's death put a fire in my soul, a flame of anger toward mental illness and suicide.

Greg isn't the only one I lost to suicide. When I was a youth pastor, two of my students took their own lives. And



then the last straw for me came in 2019, when my friend Jarrid Wilson died by suicide on World Suicide Prevention Day. Jarrid was a great husband, father, and pastor. When pastors take their own lives, you know something has gone terribly wrong with the mental well-being of our culture.

Before Jarrid took his life, I had a recurring dream that still marks me today. In the dream, Jarrid and I were walking along a beach in Southern California, talking like usual. But then a strange thing happened: a bubble of water formed all around Jarrid's head, and he was drowning on dry ground. I was concerned and asked if I could help him, but he kept telling me everything was fine as he ignored the fact that he was drowning.

I don't believe in coincidences, so I knew God was trying to tell me something about Jarrid through that dream. But I never had enough courage to ask my friend about it. I never called him to see if he was okay. I'd had disturbing dreams about my uncle Greg too, and I'd never checked on him either. Why didn't I? For the same reason. Because I was afraid.

I was afraid I'd offend them. I was afraid I'd hurt their feelings. And I believed the myth that said asking someone whether they're experiencing severe depression and might be contemplating suicide could make the situation worse or even plant the thought of suicide into their mind. I was afraid that asking them about my dream might actually push them off a mental ledge.

But after Jarrid died, I spent hours upon hours researching self-harm, mental illness, and suicide. I discovered that

asking a simple question such as “Have you had thoughts of suicide lately?” can actually save a life and is more helpful than hurtful.

### **Three Lies of Suicide**

Before I go on with my story, let’s talk about three myths of suicide we know are often at play. They’re all based on the enemy’s lies, and if he’s speaking them to you, fight back!

#### ***1. Lie: Everyone will be better off if you’re gone.***

The enemy tells depressed people that everyone will be better off when they’re gone. Kurt Cobain wrote a long goodbye letter. At the end of it, he wrote to his wife, Courtney, these words: “Please keep going Courtney, for Frances [sic].” Frances is their daughter. “For her life, which will be so much happier without me.”<sup>3</sup> I wonder if Frances’s life is better without her father. I can’t answer that; only she can. But it’s most likely that taking your life won’t be better for anyone.

So don’t believe the lie that you’re a burden, that when you make the choice to leave, everyone else will be better off. No one will be better off. Those you love will live out their lives with guilt, a cloud of trauma, self-doubt, questions, pain, and anger for the rest of their lives. And all the while they’ll think they weren’t worth fighting for. Oh, they’ll know it wasn’t you who took your life. They’ll know it was the darkness ravaging you, that you really weren’t thinking clearly. They’ll know that intellectually. But it will be a gut punch in their soul, and it will be agonizing.

## 2. *Lie: Suicide is your destiny.*

Suicide is not God's purpose, and it's not His plan for you. Your destiny is not in leaving; it's in staying. Yes, you may be free from your earthly pain, but you'll be leaving your true destiny behind. You were handcrafted by God on purpose, for a purpose. It's not about what life has done to you; it's about what you can do to life. Remember this verse? "I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

## 3. *Lie: Suicide is glamorous.*

This is shocking, I know. You say, *How could suicide be glamorous?* Well, the enemy has a way of making terrible things look that way. Scientists dub one way "suicide contagion." Comedian Robin Williams took his own life, and in the four months that followed, the suicide rate in America rose 10 percent, and the manner of his suicide rose more than 30 percent. Going back decades, actress Marilyn Monroe reportedly took her own life, and the suicide rate rose 12 percent.<sup>4</sup>

In some crazy way, the media attention for some celebrities who commit suicide adds to their legacy. It creates a cult effect, a vortex that sucks people in and pulls them under to this glamour, making them believe suicide is actually a good thing.

If you're having suicidal thoughts, don't let these powerful myths sway you. They're lies. As I said, fight back! Stay here. We're here for you. And we can help.

## **The Birth of Stay Here**

The revelation that asking others about their mental health can help rather than harm brought me, along with my extended family, to the point of starting Stay Here in 2020. We wanted to break the stigma around mental illness and suicide and change statistics.

From the end of 2019 to the spring of 2020, I had spoken in a couple of high schools on the topic of suicide and mental illness with great results. We had bookings through to the end of 2020, and lives were being changed. But then COVID-19 hit and took away all our bookings. Sadly, when people needed help more than ever, we couldn't physically be there to bring it to them.

But we couldn't allow the pandemic to keep us from bringing hope to the hurting, so we prayed, brainstormed, and developed a new plan. Instead of Stay Here consisting of a couple of people with microphones speaking at schools, what if we trained and equipped millions of leaders to reach their own homes, schools, workplaces, teams, churches, and cities?

Well, in April 2021, that's exactly what began to happen after God gave me a life-changing vision. My wife, Mariah, and I were attending a leaders retreat in Kona, Hawaii, when at one point a dozen pastors circled us to pray for us and our ministry. During this powerful time of prayer, I had a vision. I saw a stadium full of teenagers with their hands raised. On the stage was a man of God named Lou Engle leading the entire stadium in prayer for their generation to be saved, and then he shouted the phrase "Gen Z will be suicide free!" The crowd shouted the phrase back

and then marched out of the stadium and onto their campuses, shouting it in the hallways and classrooms.

I knew what God was showing me: If we really wanted to save lives, we needed an army. It couldn't be done with just a couple of motivational speakers. As I already shared, we put *Gen Z will be suicide free* on T-shirts, and now thousands of people wear them all over the world. Anytime I'm traveling, I see one in an airport or at the event where I'm speaking. The message is truly spreading.

A few months later, our team developed a free online (or in-person) suicide prevention training that anyone can take. We call it the ACT Training, where you can learn how to save a life after spotting the warning signs of someone battling depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. We published the training in August 2021, and a year later, as of this writing, more than fifteen thousand people have completed the course.

I tell you all this to let you know that people do care. Help is on the way, and this generation—Gen Z—will choose life. The future is bright for us. And I believe thousands of other mental health organizations will start up over the next decade and join us in the fight to save lives. Those who are suffering will learn help is available, including from professionals in the medical and counseling fields. As I indicate later in this book, all plans that lead to mental health healing are God's plans, for we're told that every good and perfect thing comes from Him (James 1:17).

But most of all, help is available from Jesus Himself. Always.

Will you join me in choosing life? Will you fight for those who don't want to see another day? Together, we can be the sign the Gen Z generation is searching for. We can shine a light into the dark places. We can breathe fresh purpose into weary souls. We can change the narrative over this generation.

Are you in?

### *Prayer*

*Jesus, I choose life. I'm ready to receive the life you promised me, a rich and full one. I'm also ready to be a carrier of life to the brokenhearted. Let your light shine not only in me but through me to the darkest places. Let me be a sign to live for those looking for one. Give me hope for my own life and for the future of the Gen Z generation. In your name, amen.*

### **For Reflection**

1. What do you think God's plan is for your generation? When you think about your generation, do you have hope? Or are you struggling to see a brighter future? Ask God to help you see what He sees.
2. As you read this book, will you be willing to ask God to bring change into your own life? Are you ready for transformation and healing? If so, in your own words, ask God to start that process now.