

# East Fork: A Journal of the Arts

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## Creative Non-Fiction

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Maddie Hughes

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## Maddie Hughes

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### The Day My Life Changed Forever

I woke up with the worst stomach ache I've ever experienced in an ice cold hospital room. I was unaware of my surroundings. My arms were stuck with IVs that connected to a machine that yelled every time I moved. My parents came up to the rock hard bed, relieved I was awake, but I had no idea what was going on or where I was. I was then told that I had been unconscious for two days and had overdosed.

I had been struggling mentally and acting out for about two years before the overdose. I had been feeling numb and helpless. I had gotten myself into a lot of trouble and lost all my privileges, but it didn't bother me one bit. I then fell into a very depressed stage. Every day was a struggle. This time period took a major toll on my family and relationships.

One day, during my sophomore year, I purchased pills through my bedroom window. The next day, I skipped school and went to my friends' house. There was a rough knock on the door. My parents had called the cops. I was taken to school and placed in ISS. That night I downed four random pills, I had read it was a possible fatal combination, making this my first suicide attempt. I spent all night on the tiles of my bathroom overheating in pain with my heartbeat racing. The next morning my pupils were huge and my mom knew something was wrong. She cautiously asked, "Did you take something?" I told her what pills I took, so she could look them up. I was taken to the doctor to get medically cleared and then to set up a plan for my mental health. I got placed on Zoloft, which couldn't have been more useless, and began therapy. Nothing seemed like it was working. This, however, wouldn't be the last attempt.

Months went by, I was doing all right, but then basketball came around in May. I was being pressured to play or else I wouldn't be allowed to do anything. My parents and I got into this huge argument the night of June 28th, 2018. That was the night I decided I couldn't take it anymore. After my parents went to sleep, I grabbed about four-hundred ibuprofen and placed them into a plastic bag, because the bottle would be too loud. I then continued to grab a lemon-lime Gatorade and snuck into the basement to take a shower. During the shower, I downed all the pills. I went upstairs and gave my dog a hug, then crawled into bed next to my mom. I struggled to breathe throughout the night, because my body was trying to throw up the pills.

The next morning my parents attempted to wake me up for basketball practice but I wasn't moving. My dad tossed water on me and shook me. Nothing was working, so an ambulance came. The EMT asked me, "What did you take?" Everything moved in slow motion. I answered, "A lot of ibuprofen." Then I passed out in the ambulance which knocked me unconscious for three days and was transferred to Children's Hospital. First, I was taken to the emergency room and was about to get transferred to the psych ward, but my kidneys were failing. Then moved to the ICU where I would remain for the next four days. My parents never left my side. I never threw up once nor was my stomach pumped.

After two days, I finally woke up. My parents looked over at me with glassy eyes and exhaustion. The light had completely left their eyes. It was heartbreaking. Questions soon filled my head, and I began asking them.

"Did I die?"

"No."

"Am I going to be okay?"

"The doctors think so."

That sent shivers down my spine. My mom didn't leave the hospital once and my dad came before and after work. I had a vague memory and was in extreme pain. I had someone sitting in my room constantly as "suicide watch." My dad coped by talking to who was ever in the room while my mom completely shut down. I felt extremely malnourished and dehydrated. I could only have ice on a sponge with water for the first day. I struggled to even gain an appetite for two more days. I was so dehydrated that the V.A.T had to use an ultrasound in an attempt to find a vein to draw blood from. The bed was hard as a rock my back would ache in pain while the only distraction was horrible reality TV. I wasn't allowed to walk without the help of my mom. I had these compressing wraps on my legs hoping to get my blood circulating again.

Finally, after four days, I transferred to a regular hospital room. My grandparents drove in from Canton to visit me. It was so awkward and uncomfortable. It was as if they looked at me wrong I might shatter. My grandma and cousin came to visit me after and they were the only people who treated me normally, not like I was broken. After I passed a few mandatory tests, my parents and the doctor discussed where I was going next.

I ended up being transferred in an ambulance to the Lindner Center by ambulance. It was a freezing and cruel place. My parents had to leave me and came back for daily visits. It was so hard each time my parents left, I just wanted them to take me with them. It was so lonely if you weren't depressed before you went in you definitely would be by the time you left. I woke up at five a.m for blood drawing and my weight. I was feeling worse than I had before. Then, my doctor introduced me to this study with esketamine that the University of Cincinnati was performing on people with serious suicide thoughts. I then found out this would extend my stay at the Lindner Center. I had already been there for a week and was losing my mind.

I met with a lady named Leah to complete paperwork and a bunch of tests. She had to draw my blood. I had such a bad experience with people drawing my blood, because of how dehydrated I was. I was poked in the foot and the hand by the nurses at the Lindner center with no blood even able to be taken. It was like they did not even know what they were doing. Leah, however, did it perfectly. I was then accepted into the study that would help me more than I would ever have imagined. The morning after I was accepted, I was transferred to the William House, which was on the second floor of the Lindner Center, to start my first dose. My first dose had to be done in the William House so the doctors could make sure I was okay throughout the night. Three days later, I cleared to go home.

My dad came to pick me up. The fresh air felt so amazing. It was so weird walking back into my house. I felt like an outsider at first. The first thing I did was power on my phone and take a shower. I sat in the shower for what seemed like forever, listening to music. It was the best shower ever. For once, I finally felt clean. That night my parents bought me Chipotle, my favorite restaurant, and my brother and his wife came to visit me. I had not had a soda in a month. It tasted so refreshing. It felt so good to be home and sleep in my own comfortable and warm bed.

Every third day I would go to the University of Cincinnati campus for my study. It was given to me three times in the nose. I instantly felt numb, dizzy, and everything was blurry. It didn't last very long, but it made me tired. Then I would hang out with Leah and eat chipotle while I waited to be cleared. This study continued for the next four months. Every visit I was paid eighty-three dollars and was given thirty for food. It added up quickly, and this gave me the chance to spoil my family the following Christmas. Thankfully, this upsetting story turned into a happy ending.

The study truly changed my life. I was feeling better quickly, and I bonded with many leaders in the program. My support system extended beyond my family. It was a miracle I made it through this experience without major complications. After returning home, my amazing boss, Lyle, allowed me to continue my job at Snowie. I felt lucky and finally close again to my parents. I continued to get my life back on track. The most difficult situations make us realize what we have and what is important to us. It was unfortunate that is what it had to come to, but along the way it improved my relationships, increased my appreciation and gave me a new insight on life.

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What do you think of Maddie's story? Why not tell her yourself! Be sure to put her name, your email, "The Day My Life Changed Forever" in the subject, and your message so she can see your comment!

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Email: \*

Subject: \*

Message: \*