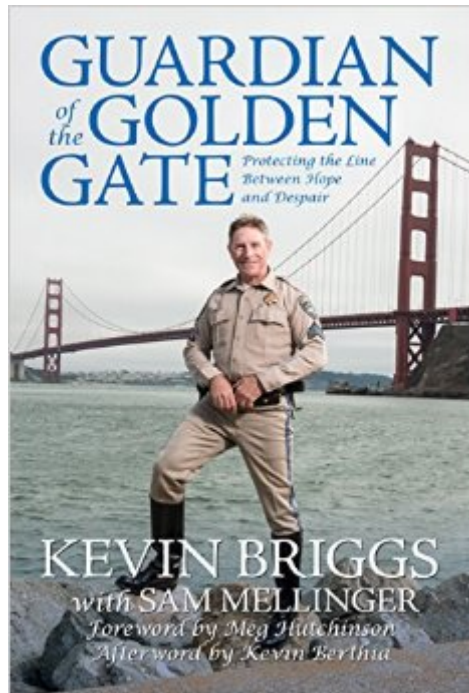


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# Guardian Of The Golden Gate: Protecting The Line Between Hope And Despair



## Synopsis

The wind was gusting around the Golden Gate Bridge on a March afternoon in 2005 when a 22-year-old man climbed the railing, convinced he and this world would be better without each other. He put himself on a thin beam 220 feet above the Pacific Ocean. The man had just lost his job and felt overwhelmed as a new father. Kevin Berthia wanted to die, and he had come to the world's most effective suicide destination to make that happen. That's when he met a highway patrolman, a former Army soldier and San Quentin State Prison guard named Kevin Briggs. 'I know you must be in tremendous pain,' Briggs said over the railing. 'If you want to talk, I'm here to listen.' The next 90 minutes saved Berthia's life. 'I opened up about stuff I'd never dealt with before,' he recalls. 'Kevin gave me a reason to try again.' Berthia is one of hundreds of Americans to come within inches of ending their lives with a jump off the Golden Gate Bridge, only to meet Briggs and decide to give life another chance. Out of those hundreds who have talked with Briggs on the bridge, only two have jumped. As he told the San Francisco Chronicle, 'I've talked to people from ten minutes to seven hours. I very much despise losing. I do whatever I can to get that person back over the rail. I play to win.' Before his days at the Golden Gate, Briggs spent three years in the Army before being discharged after a cancer diagnosis. He beat cancer and then entered law enforcement as a correctional officer. He was Charles Manson's prison guard, among others, at San Quentin. His own personal story includes heart issues and dealing with divorce and depression in his family. The bulk of Briggs' career was with the California State Highway Patrol, including more than two decades with the Marin County office. There, he worked predominately on the Golden Gate Bridge, which every month produces four to six suicidal subjects, multiple traffic collisions, and dozens of other law enforcement calls. After 9-11, security was heightened even more. Briggs had no training with suicide prevention or mental illness before taking the job but has since become such a respected expert that he's helped train the FBI and several major corporations. He's been called 'a true American hero' by Robert Gebbia, director of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and is among the country's most active speakers in promoting crisis management, leadership skills, and suicide intervention and prevention worldwide. His TED Talk has been viewed well over a million times. More Americans die of suicide than homicide every year. Nine percent of Americans are dealing with depression at any particular time, many of them with major depression that can last a lifetime. Depression is the leading cause of disability for Americans age 15 to 44. These are underappreciated problems in the United States, at least in part, because they're usually hidden and often come with a stigma of shame. In *Guardian of the Golden Gate*, Briggs shares his experiences with the help of people who credit their lives to him. His inspiring story will help shine a

light on a killer that lurks in the darkness and show readers signs to look for and the value of hope. You will gain insight into this steadfast hero that will allow you to see why he's known as the Golden Gate's guardian. Kevin Briggs aims to promote mental illness awareness and ultimately break the stigmas associated with it. By reading this book, you join him in that pursuit. Suicide is preventable. There is hope. There is help.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Great book! If it hadn't been for my brother jumping to his death on the East coast a few months ago I might not have been tuned in to read this as those of us who are called "survivors of suicide" can't do anything to bring our loved ones back and are more likely than others in the population to then work towards suicide prevention. I wouldn't want anyone else to experience the horrible loss my family has experienced. So reading about Kevin and his work toward suicide prevention was a next step for me. He is humble and honest in his writing about his own mental health struggles and losses he has experienced that helped him in his work to talk others back over the rail. I'm glad I pre-ordered this book and read through it in just a few days. We need to focus more on those people doing such work as Kevin and his fellow officers on the bridge do, especially in these days where every mistake a police officer makes is headline news. So many of them put their lives on the line day after day for years witnessing horrific events that impact their own mental health.

While I have been personally touched by suicide and mental illness, I am ashamed to say that I was unaware of the magnitude of this issue. Suicide is truly an epidemic. Awareness for the issues of

mental illness is part of that epidemic. Kevin Briggs is in a battle for all of us. The book is full of great stories both on and off the bridge, that allow you to get to know him and his cause. He is truly a wealth of useful information. It's also a good read. Thank you Mr. Briggs for your energy, your commitment, your efforts for all of those suffering from mental illness, and your new book. This is a book that needs to be shared!

I had the privilege of working with Kevin for about 8 years, and we were on the motor squad together for 5 of those years. Kevin is a great guy, a dedicated officer, and one of the best supervisors/sergeant I've ever had. I have attended one of Kevin's seminars, and left feeling deeply touched and impressed with his passion, dedication, and presentation of the seminar regarding mental illness. I purchased and read *Guardian of the Golden Gate: Protecting the Line Between Hope and Despair*. The book is an excellent and educational read. Kevin balances the book with many interesting personal experiences, stories, tragedy, humor, lessons, warning signs, symptoms, treatment, hope, and support. They are delivered in a manner to keep your interest while smoothly flowing. Kevin's book has helped even me while dealing with the most difficult period of my life following a serious on-duty accident on my motorcycle. I can personally say everything Kevin wrote is true, unexaggerated, and brutally honest. Everyone should read his book. Each person will at a minimum enjoy the stories, humor, and see the life and job through the eyes of a police officer. Many will gain insight into mental illness, learn about recognizing mental illness, and many dealing with mental illness will gain hope and knowledge of treatment options. Give this book a chance and you won't be disappointed.

Candid, heartfelt and engaging, this book is a must for everybody. I read it in one sitting and it changed my views about mental illness.

Kevin Briggs' experiences of responding to law enforcement calls of people in pivotal points of their lives who are making a decision between life and death is eye-opening. His sincerity, honesty, kindness and empathy when encountering each person, coupled with his intense listening skills to find that tiny piece of hope in each of their lives, is powerful - and is the reason hundreds of them have a "tomorrow." Sharing his own battles with cancer, depression, and struggles paved the way for his compassion and skills to help others. He thoughtfully gives the reader the tools he developed over his career so each of us can help others, too. A true hero!

I loved this book and read it in two sittings. The Sergeant's life in and of itself would be a great book on its own. His experience and insight provide a pretty unflinching picture of people from all walks of life that come to the GG Bridge with the intention of taking their own lives. The stories of people he spoke with, and was there for, when they reconsidered their decision were touching if not inspirational. Living an hour away from the Bridge and having still not seen it for myself, I never got the appeal jumpers saw in it. Sgt. Briggs is quick to enlighten the reader that jumping from the Bridge is not the peaceful passing most assume it is. Quite the opposite. Anyone who is interested in law enforcement, human interest or inspirational type stories should consider picking up this book. Told with humility, the book reads like conversation shared over coffee. Well done. I typically give my books away but this one I think I'll keep.

I enjoyed reading this book for a different point of view on the issues surrounding suicide. It is a devastating reality many people are unaware of that continues to plague this country. I urge you to read it for the ending. The stories in between are necessary but not as much as the instruction at the end. This book is necessary for you and your loved ones because you never know when someone may need you to carry them.

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