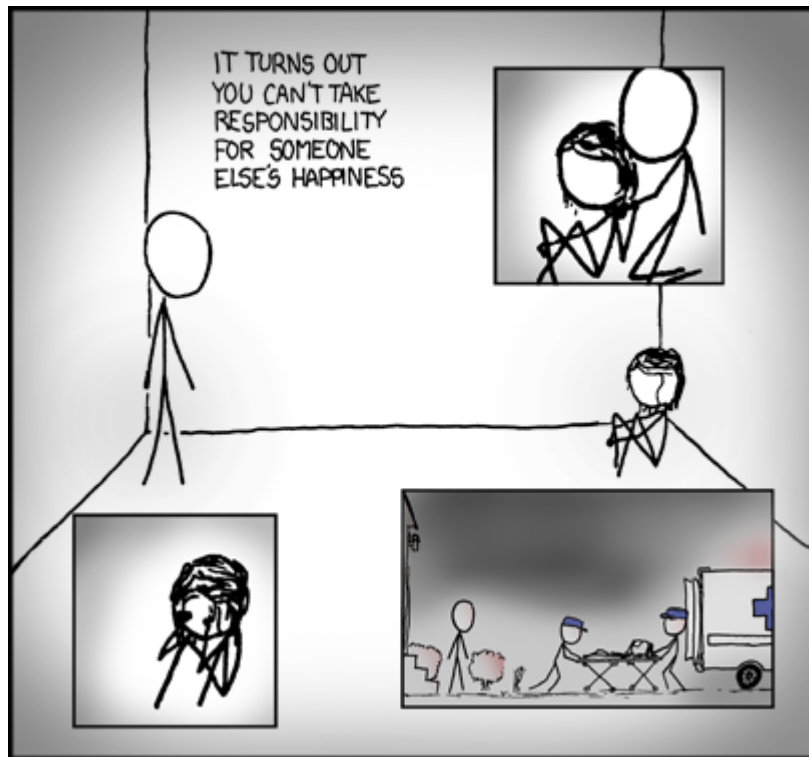


# 383: Helping

*Explain xkcd: It's 'cause you're dumb.*

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## Helping



Title text: Oh, look, the 'make everything better' button was here behind the bookshelf all along.

## Explanation

Everyone wants to help someone in need, but sometimes the help they can offer isn't enough, or is the wrong kind of help. Cueball tries to help Megan, who is in psychological/emotional distress, but despite his efforts she ends up in hospital. She may have attempted suicide, but it's not very clear. The point is that sometimes you just can't make people happy, it's something they have to do themselves.

The title text refers to a hidden button behind the bookshelf, but Cueball did not find it. This is ironic because, although people can try help with psychological/emotional problems, there is no magic button that makes everything better. Others speculate the "magic button" was what she used to attempt suicide.

Given his likely negative feelings towards Valentine's Day, as seen in the most of his Valentines comics, it may not be a coincidence that he sent this one out the day before February 14. He did not draw any Valentines Day related comics this year as he did the past two years.

## Transcript

It turns out you can't take responsibility for someone else's happiness.  
[Cueball looking at a curled-up Megan.]

[Cueball's hand on Megan's shoulder.]

[Megan has her head in her hands.]

[Cueball watching an ambulance take Megan away in a stretcher.]

## Discussion

Most depressing XKCD ever? 71.201.53.130 14:24, 22 August 2013 (UTC)

Every time when I see this comic I'm close before some tear drops running out of my eyes ;(  
--Dgbt (talk) 21:42, 9 December 2013 (UTC)

Waitwaitwait. So the guy was in the building all along, witnessing the suicide/self-harm, and he failed to stop a woman from apparently successfully knocking herself out? 16:19, 24 May 2014 (UTC)  
141.101.88.205 (talk) *(please sign your comments with ~~~~)*

I thought Cueball was choking her!108.162.238.169

I thought maybe it was about Randall's wife. Just like some of the comics feature her implicitly, I thought maybe this one did. 108.162.216.20 (talk) *(please sign your comments with ~~~~)*

I think the explanation is a bit off. Sometimes getting someone into a hospital is helping. I've had to call 911 to get friends help. Things usually got bad for a while after that. 108.162.216.124 21:46, 26 April 2015 (UTC)

The first time I saw this one, it was some 2 or 3 days after I had to call the police for a friend who was attempting suicide. It hit way, way too close to home, to the point where I wanted to cry. I ended up just getting up right then and going for a long walk in the woods to clear my head. 7:24, 2 July 2015 (UTC) 173.59.1.79 (talk) *(please sign your comments with ~~~~)*

To 108.162.216.20, he married in 2011... this comic was made in 2008. Unfortunately, we may never know who he is referring to. 141.101.84.114 (talk) *(please sign your comments with ~~~~)*

Am I the only one who feels that the point is he tried to talk to someone to cheer them up, but the woman was so distraught by what cueball said, it lead to self harm? 107.136.89.38 (talk)  
*(please sign your comments with ~~~~)*

I think the text is rather confusing: If you take responsibility for somebody's sadness, as in "I'm

sorry. This was my fault." it may help. But saying "I made you feel this good" seems like bragging and does not help. But she was apparently already sad, so, yeah, kinda confused. Isn't that what explainxkcd is for? That's right, Jacky720 just signed this (talk | contribs) 22:52, 24 June 2017 (UTC)

When you care for someone, especially a significant other, your natural instinct as a decent human being is to provide help and support when they are in distress or upset. But with issues like depression, tendencies toward self-harm, or even general anxiety, your attempt to help provides no benefit or much more likely makes things worse. You being so close to that person makes it that much harder for them to be helped by you, and it often isn't your place to assume the role of therapist or counselor no matter how much you want to. No matter how much you think that person should be happy, you can't assume responsibility for it and no amount of convincing or reassuring is going to help that. When things get really bad, professional medical help and distance are the only thing that will keep that person safe. I cry when I read this. I've sat and held the hand of a close friend while he was handcuffed by campus police for his own safety and was escorted to a hospital for treatment. It takes a long time to heal that divide - and its the most frustrating thing in the world to know the best thing you can do is step away for a while. If you ever feel the need to comfort a spouse, a child, a friend who is so overwhelmed with existence that they aren't sure they want to live anymore, you'll understand this panel. 172.68.141.172 (talk) *(please sign your comments with ~~~~)*

First time I read this comic, I didnt think much of it. Rereading it years later, after I lived with a loved one struggling with depression, made me cry so much. It is exactly what I feel.

Does anyone else feel like the comic is actually saying that sometimes, bad things will happen no matter whether or not you try to help?

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