

**I**mproved mental and emotional health is just a message away.

Cope Notes -- a company organically-born by way of its founder sending one positive text message to dozens of friends -- is a psychology-based subscription service that provides daily text messages designed to bring healthy thoughts patterns to the brain.

"It's grown much, much, much faster than I anticipated," says Tampa, Florida-based Crowder. "I started Cope Notes as a volunteer project; I'm not one of those 'tech bros' who aimed to jump into the start-up world and try to make the next Facebook. When I started Cope Notes, the vision was about helping people in need of peer-support when I wasn't available; and then it grew into helping people



*Johnny Crowder  
Cope Notes Founder*

*Johnny Crowder, a survivor of suicide and abuse, launched a psychology-based service that provides daily text messages designed to bring healthy thoughts patterns to the brain.*

Johnny Crowder, Cope Notes Founder and CEO, is a survivor of suicide and abuse, as well as a longtime speaker and advocate in the mental health world. Upon unveiling [Cope Notes](#) in 2018, he never envisioned what the company could become in such short time.

in need of peer-support when peer-support specialists weren't available."

Such growth is charted by: over 900,000 Cope Nope texts exchanged across 90-plus countries to almost 20,000 subscribers... and



counting.

At less than \$10/month for one randomly-timed message every day ("A year of daily support for less than the price of a single therapy session," is a company mantra), the service offers a free 7-Day trial, and is serving clientele via individual, gift, and family subscriptions, along with group subscriptions for enterprise clients ranging from county governments, to nonprofits, to universities and businesses.

The messages and business model are totally anonymous in nature, and recipients may reply to messages as a means of healthy venting or catharsis (though customers don't receive additional replies in real time). Texts are sent at different times each day, and no two subscribers ever receive the same message at the same time.

Additionally, if not moreover, ample study, research, vetting and professional review is behind each message.

"All of the content is specifically designed to be very easy to understand, to be short, casual and conversational," explains Crowder. "Each text is written by peers with personal experience; anybody who is creating content for us is somebody with first-hand experience with mental illness, loss, trauma, hardship or addiction. It's not about forecasting what they think somebody else may want to hear; they're writing *what they needed to hear* when they were going through it."

Drafts of the messages are then sent to Cope Notes' Clinical Oversight Panel, comprised of more than a dozen clinicians, counselors, academics and social workers.

"These are the mental health professionals who review, edit and approve all of our content," Crowder continues. "We're not just finding some quotes on, say, Instagram, and popping them into our messages. Each of our texts goes through an in-depth review and validation process before being delivered to a



subscriber."

Along with its mission receiving respective stamps of approval from both the National Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health America, the company's content process has recently undergone more extensive review.

"We just had the University of South Florida review and code each text in our library," adds Crowder. "And this is a team of researchers at the university's Department of Mental Health Law & Policy going through and coding based on the psychological principle that each text is reinforcing."

Examplifying the messages, Crowder points to a few recent favorites:

***When anxious, your body hunches over to protect the heart and lungs.***

***Show your body that it's not in danger by standing up straight with your shoulders back.***

**And:**

***It can be hard to see ourselves how other people see us, so here's a little self-esteem exercise:***

***What do you think is your most attractive personality trait?***

As for further proof-of-purchase behind the brain/stimulus dynamic, Crowder's powerful TEDx Talk from 2020, "How to Grow as a Person (And Why It Sucks)" evidences the neuroscience behind the Notes.

"Your brain is impacted by the thoughts that it thinks, and also the stimulus that it digests," Crowder relates from his TED Talk, which has been viewed over 700,000 times on YouTube. "And all incoming stimulus has an impact, but the problem is that our brain doubles and triples down on what it knows; the brain prefers to think comfortable and familiar thoughts, even if they're negative in nature."

Cope Notes' daily stream of positive, engaging and thought-provoking messages is helping its recipients build a better brain, text by text.

"As negative thoughts repeat themselves like a broken record, our texts present a way to guar-

antee an interruption to a negative thought pattern at least once every 24-hours," says Crowder. "We take that step of interrupting that negative loop, and with consistent interruptions over time, your brain forms new neural pathways associated with the positive thoughts that were introduced via our messages."

At a time when the mental health of the world was at its most fragile, Cope Notes worked to provide salve across the peak pandemic months.

Via what Crowder describes as a "risky decision" for the company, Cope Notes created a free, quarantine-length gift subscription during the spring of 2020, which included pandemic-centric messages related to isolation, fear, anxiety, and loneliness.

"It was a weird, scary moment when the need was very high, but it also felt somewhat relieving that we could lend a helping hand and be part of the solution," says Crowder of the company's popular "Cope with COVID" initiative. "But it was our gut response, trying to give to people in that moment of real need."

As a result, risk equaled reward for both Cope Notes and its message recipients; the customer count grew by the thousands, while Cope Notes extended its reach by adding subscribers from a dozen new countries. The growth, coupled with quarantine stretches, resulted in more inbound messages from subscribers, along with a rise in constructive feedback and feature suggestions that helped shape their product roadmap.

"From a business standpoint, it ended up being incredibly valuable market research, because there's no better way to figure out what people want and need than to hear it directly from them," concludes Crowder. "I feel very fortunate to be on the receiving end of so much genius input and direction from the people who have ultimately made Cope Notes what it is today: our subscribers." — By Judd Spicer, California Business Journal

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