

9TH ANNUAL **CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE**

CREATING & SUPPORTING LIVES WORTH LIVING



**ACTION, EDUCATION,
INTERVENTION & PREVENTION**



JANUARY 23, 24 & 25, 2025

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Breakfast, Lunch and Refreshments

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST will be served each morning in the *Garden Gallery*.
On Thursday and Friday, a **BUFFET LUNCH** will be served in the *ATRIUM*
(Lower Level) for attendees. **DESSERT** will be served in the *Garden Gallery*.

The Saturday program, including **BREAKFAST** and a **BOX LUNCH**,
will be served in the *Grande Ballroom*. If you have dietary restrictions, please see
Leo or Kristi so that we can make an effort to accommodate your needs.
Leo@KevinsSong.org

Wireless Internet

at the Conference Center

Connect to
"ST JOHN'S EVENTS"
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Providing **EDUCATION, HOPE** and **HEALING** to Individuals and Communities



The first day of this bold and comprehensive conference will focus on integrating schools, youth-serving organizations, and clinicians to promote Suicide Prevention and mental well-being. Presentations will appeal to educators, mental health professionals and suicide prevention advocates who work with young people to build awareness and to share prevention strategies that are tailored to this diverse population.



The second day of the Conference will include an array of powerful presentations that engage clinicians and suicide prevention advocates to enhance their knowledge and skills to engage people to live their best lives and prevent suicide. Attendees will hear the latest in research about suicide and risk assessment as well as evidenced-based treatments and prevention strategies to better serve individuals and communities at risk.



The Saturday program focuses on survivors of suicide. The stories of loss and attempt survivors will help to ease the pain for those who often suffer alone and in silence. The day will also address how to manage the grief and loss following a death by suicide. The program will offer hope to those who have suffered a loss and to those who love and support them.

Attendees will have an opportunity to meet privately in group support sessions facilitated by mental health professionals.



Survivor Support Groups

If you or someone you know has been impacted by suicide, consider joining our Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group. The group meets virtually on

the first and third Wednesdays each month at 7pm ET. For specific information about the support groups and to receive the meeting link, please go to www.KevinsSong.org or email SupportGroup@KevinsSong.org



In order to create a more amplified voice, Kevin's Song has launched a collaborative initiative of local, statewide and national groups, regional coalitions, mental health providers and

community mental health organizations to explore how, together, we can promote meaningful change in policy and improve the quality and quantity of mental health resources in our state. If you'd like to lend your voice, please reach out.



Resources on our Website:

KevinsSong.org

Our comprehensive website contains a list of Board and Advisory Committee members, a calendar of upcoming events, and, most importantly, a comprehensive directory of local, state and national resources for suicide prevention.



Monthly Newsletter

Published and emailed monthly to our growing list of sponsors, supporters and friends. If you'd like to be added to our email list, contact Jennifer@KevinsSong.org. If we hope to achieve our vision of "a world without suicide" we need you with us.



Library of Books and Articles

The Kevin's Song library of books, articles, podcasts and videos is updated monthly, including a Book-of-the-Month, with discounts on popular books through our website.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

2024 Annual Conference Attendees Said:

98%
YES!

When asked if the **information** and **training** helped them achieve the following learning objectives:

- Increased knowledge on suicide risk factors, prevention strategies, treatment alternatives
- Knowledge of cultural influences that impact diverse communities and treatment strategies that address factors that are unique to these communities.



"It has been my honor to attend each and every one of these annual events, and moreover, my attendance has enabled me to witness firsthand the growth and the energy generated by this meeting. The good that they are accomplishing on behalf of those bereaved by suicide and others is considerable and occurs year-round; their footprint is in Michigan, where they have risen to prominence as an influential suicide prevention organization, and it is growing beyond Michigan regionally and nationally."

Thomas E. Joiner, Ph.D.,
The Robert O. Lawton Distinguished
Professor of Psychology



"I have been involved with the Kevin's Song conference for quite a few years and have watched it grow from a small, tightly knit local effort to a large, tightly knit national effort. Each year this conference gets bigger and each year more amazing things happen because of this conference."

Bart Andrews, Ph.D.,
Chief Clinical Officer, BHR



The Kevin's Song three-day conference will bring together educators, mental health professionals, professional trainees and students, business, and community leaders as well as members of the public, survivors of suicide loss, and attempt survivors.

The 9th Annual Kevin's Song Conference on Suicide is designed to raise awareness about suicide and its impact, as well as highlight the importance of suicide prevention and risk mitigation as a collective responsibility to support the safety and well-being of our communities. Suicide prevention is very focused on those who have died, those we have lost. This is an important focus, and we need to acknowledge these losses. But we also need suicide prevention to focus on the living as a poignant reminder of the importance of fostering a compassionate and supportive society.

From January 23-25, 2025, numerous organizations, health professionals and communities will come together to shed light on signs, symptoms, and strategies to prevent suicide and to support and foster lives worth living.

The 2025 Kevin's Song Conference on Suicide Will Ask:

- Are we purposely creating cultures that promote living?
- Are we actively trying to create lives filled with hope, connection, purpose, and possibility?
- In essence, are we helping all of our community members to have lives worth living?

The speakers and presentations will address all aspects of this public health crisis in an effort to better understand and prevent suicide. The mission of the 9th Annual Kevin's Song Conference on Suicide is to break down the barriers; to build pathways to better models of prevention and treatment; and to create and support

LIVES WORTH LIVING.



Conference Goals:

- To assist mental health professionals and educators to implement strategies to prevent youth suicide with a special focus on high-risk and underserved youth. Knowing how to identify a young person at risk and understanding the role of the school and therapist in preventing suicide is vital if we are going to have an impact on reducing the incidence of suicide attempts and deaths.
- To share information that will help attendees to identify and address risk factors and promote protective factors, including the safe storage of firearms, within and beyond their own communities.
- To provide loss and attempt survivors with information and resources to help with their individual journeys through healing, loss and grief, and to assist mental health professionals and other caregivers in understanding the needs of survivors.



KEVIN FRANCIS URSO

was loved and respected for his quick wit, his intelligence, his sense of humor and his caring nature. For ten years he was a child care worker at the Children's Home of Detroit where he won the praise of the staff, board members and, most importantly, the children. Numerous young adult men would return to the Children's Home to thank Kevin for his kindness, firmness and humor in their interactions with him.

Others remember Kevin fondly for his love and care of animals. As a child he rescued numerous stray dogs and, as an adult, he delighted in caring for his own dogs as well as those of others.

His sense of humor was legendary. Many thought he could have had a career in stand-up comedy. Kevin also loved music. He loved music so much so that many of his major life experiences were identified and even defined by specific songs or artists.

Sadly, Kevin also dealt with depression. On March 23, 2013, at the age of 41, Kevin ended his life at his home in Florida. He will be forever remembered and missed.

Following his death, his parents, John and Gail Urso, founded Kevin's Song - in honor of Kevin and to give voice to his memory. Kevin's Song is working to educate and comfort other survivors whose lives have been affected by similar tragedy. Hopefully, with the founding of Kevin's Song in memory and honor of Kevin, more open discussion about mental health issues and suicide will occur and lives will be saved.



DEAR FRIENDS,

2024 seemed to just fly by. It was a busy 12 months under new leadership for Kevin's Song.

Jennifer Fair Margraf, our Executive Director, has done a wonderful job guiding us throughout the year. Our new Executive Committee, Fritz Klinger, Chairperson, Justin Urso, Vice-Chairperson, La Toya Bond, Secretary and Bill Gough, Treasurer, have filled their roles with energy, passion and an enormous commitment of time. Our deepest thanks to them.



We sadly had a number of Board Directors step away this year after serving since 2013 when Kevin's Song was founded. Our sincerest thanks to Paul Lavins, Pete King and Sidney King. We will forever be grateful for their commitment and service.

We are blessed, however, with three new Board Directors: Gigi Colombini, Julie Etheridge, and Seli Fakorzi, who joined our stellar Board of Directors in 2024, providing even greater depth in experience, knowledge and passion to the work of Kevin's Song.

This year's conference promises to be an enlightening and enriching experience. Please take in the vast amount of information that will be shared by the speakers and presenters gathered here in this beautiful, serene environment and, most of all, be enriched by the incredibly dedicated people in attendance.

With gratitude,

Gail and John Urso

Cofounders, Kevin's Song



MISSION:

Saving lives through suicide prevention education and offering hope and healing to survivors.

VISION:

A world without suicide.

Conference Committee

Leo Nouhan, *Conference Coordinator*

Jennifer Fair Margraf, *Executive Director*

Joann Brown, *Bookstore Coordinator*

Gail Urso, *Co-Founder, KS*

Sharon Nouhan, *Resource Gallery Coordinator*

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*Administrative Assistant, Sponsor and
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Kevin's Song Would Like to THANK the Following Individuals and Organizations for their Assistance in Making this Conference a Success

Alison Chekovsky,
Management Team and Staff at St. John's Resort

Kevin Zielinski, Joby Jenkins and Staff
Mercury Sound & Lighting

InsideOut Design and Development

Dave Drouillard, Encore Global

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Michael Layne, Michael Odom, David Stoyka,
Rebecca Gallagher, Gary Winkelman, Natalie Engel of
Marx Layne & Company, Public Relations Consultant

James Hassett and Students of U of D Jesuit

*Kevin's Song would like to thank the numerous volunteers who have so generously given their time
and talents to the many Kevin's Song events and activities throughout the past year.*

WELCOME TO THE KEVIN'S SONG 9TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE: **Creating & Supporting Lives Worth Living**

Dear Friends,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the 9th Annual Conference on Suicide: Creating & Supporting Lives Worth Living. This gathering brings together mental health professionals, educators, survivors, advocates, and community leaders who share a common goal: to reduce the stigma surrounding suicide, promote mental well-being, and cultivate a culture where every individual can embrace a life worth living.



Jennifer Fair Margraf,
MBA, CFRE
Executive Director

In the two years since I became Executive Director of Kevin's Song, I have been both humbled and inspired to witness the dedication of everyone involved in this remarkable community. It has been deeply fulfilling to help Gail and John Urso carry forward the mission they began 11 years ago—a mission rooted in love, resilience, and hope.

This conference is a unique and invaluable opportunity for collaboration, learning, and healing. Our theme—Creating & Supporting Lives Worth Living—is not just a guiding principle but a call to action. Together, we affirm that those struggling with mental health challenges, those affected by suicide loss, and those who have survived suicide attempts are not alone. Help is available, hope is real, and life can get better.

The Vital Importance of This Conference

The statistics surrounding suicide are a sobering reminder of the urgency of this work. Suicide is the 12th leading cause of death in the United States, claiming over 46,000 lives annually. For every life lost, countless others—family members, friends, coworkers, and entire communities—are profoundly impacted. These ripple effects underscore the need for prevention, support, and awareness.

Yet, amidst these challenges, there is hope. Suicide is preventable, and through gatherings like this, where experts, survivors, and advocates unite, we can make a meaningful difference.

Over the next three days, we will explore solutions from multiple perspectives:

- **Day One** will focus on integrating schools, youth organizations, and clinicians to foster mental well-being and suicide prevention among young people. A highlight of the day will be the *Saving A Life Award Dinner*, where we will honor exceptional leaders whose work has significantly advanced suicide prevention and mental health advocacy.

- **Day Two** will delve into cutting-edge research, innovative risk assessment techniques, and evidence-based treatments. By sharing best practices, we aim to strengthen our collective capacity to prevent suicide, alleviate suffering, and instill hope in those in crisis.

- **Day Three** will provide resources, emotional support, and connection for those who have experienced suicide loss. Through presentations, shared stories of resilience, and private group support sessions, survivors will find solace and strength.

This year, we are proud to introduce a new training session: *A Light in the Darkness: Equipping Faith Leaders for Suicide Prevention and Post-Suicide Care*. Running concurrently with the main conference, this session will empower spiritual leaders to combat stigma, offer care in times of crisis, and support individuals and families affected by suicide.

A Message of Hope

At Kevin's Song, we understand the heartbreak and devastation that suicide brings. But we also believe in the power of collective action to create a world where suicide is preventable, and every individual is supported on their journey to healing.

None of this would be possible without the vision and dedication of Gail and John Urso, whose tireless efforts have built a compassionate community committed to reducing suicide rates and providing support. Inspired by the loss of their son, Kevin, they have shown us that even in the most painful circumstances, we can find strength, purpose, and hope.

Their unwavering commitment reminds us all that while we cannot erase the pain, we can help heal it—one life, one conversation, one action at a time.

Gratitude and Hope for the Future

I want to express my deepest gratitude to each of you—our speakers, partners, sponsors, volunteers, and attendees—for your dedication to this vital cause. Your involvement is what makes this conference so impactful. Together, we are building a future full of hope and possibility, where those affected by suicide know they are seen, heard, and loved.

Thank you for being part of this transformative effort. I look forward to connecting with you during the conference and continuing this journey of hope and healing together.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Jennifer Fair Margraf
Executive Director
Kevin's Song



Kevin's Song Executive Director

Jennifer Fair Margraf, MBA CFRE

Ellen Adelman,
Administrative Assistant

Kristi Keiser,
Administrative Associate

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KEVIN'S SONG SUPPORTIVE STAFF

*The subject of suicide being discussed throughout
this conference may cause discomfort for some individuals.*

*Something seen or discussed in a presentation may trigger an emotional
reaction such as sadness, anger or other emotions. Please know that it is okay
to get up and leave during any presentation. Please also know that there are qualified
Supportive Staff members available to talk with you.*

They can be identified by the **TEAL BLUE RIBBON** on their name badge
and **ORANGE LANYARD**

Starry, Starry Night is the annual fundraiser for Kevin's Song featuring sponsorship opportunities and a dinner with entertainment, followed by a silent and live auction. Your financial support enables Kevin's Song to empower communities to prevent suicide and offer hope and healing to survivors. In the short years since Kevin's Song was founded, we have grown to become a leader in the suicide education and prevention effort in Michigan and beyond.

We have accomplished so much to fight this tragicepidemic thanks to your support and the success of Starry, Starry Night.

THANK YOU!

2024 Starry, Starry Night Committee

Gail Urso,
Co-Chair

John Urso,
Co-Chair

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Carrie Urso

Thank you to the staff at Kevin's Song and the many volunteers and businesses who have donated time and energy to bringing this special event.

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2025

STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

Please Join Us for an Evening of

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Thursday, September 18, 2025

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not being able to list all of our generous donors. We apologize for any omissions or errors in the above list.*



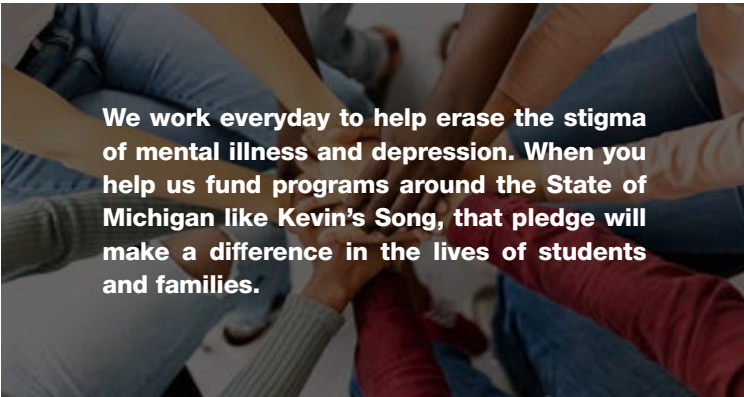
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WORKING TO ERASE THE STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND HELP PREVENT SUICIDE

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Suicide is NOT an answer we recognize.**

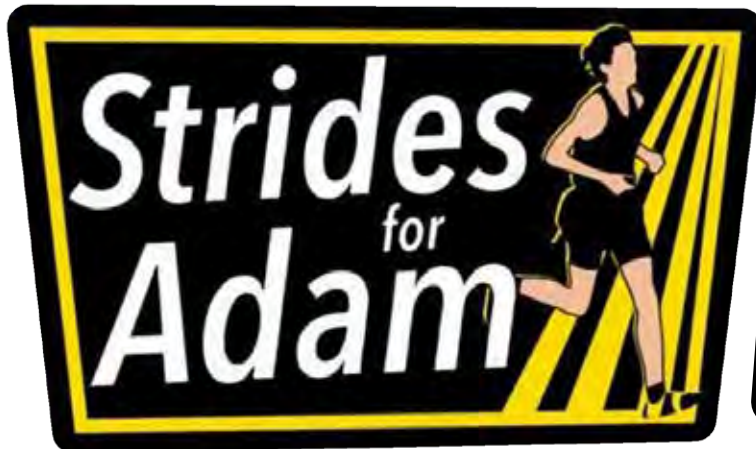


We work everyday to help erase the stigma of mental illness and depression. When you help us fund programs around the State of Michigan like Kevin's Song, that pledge will make a difference in the lives of students and families.

The JJLMF Mission

*To educate young men and women and their families about Mental Illness;
To increase awareness in the community;
and advocate for compassionate acceptance of all young people who are impacted by it and help prevent suicide.*

JJLMF.org



- **5K RUN/WALK**
- **1 MILE REFLECTION WALK**

SUNDAY, MAR. 23, 2025
YOUNG PATRIOTS PARK
14300 Library Dr., Riverview, MI 48193



Finisher Medal and T-Shirt
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Kevin's Song's 9th Annual Suicide Conference Highlights Suicide Prevention and Cultural Barriers in the Black Community

By: Amber Ogden

Digital Daily Staff Writer

Wayne County-based nonprofit Kevin's Song will host its 9th Annual Conference on Suicide from January 23-25, marking Michigan's largest gathering focused on suicide prevention and survivor support. The event will unite educators, mental health professionals, students, business leaders, and survivors to address one of the state's most urgent public health crises and work toward actionable solutions.



This year's conference theme, "Creating and Supporting Lives Worth Living," reflects the organization's mission to explore strategies to prevent suicide and support those impacted by it. Keynote presentations and breakout sessions will address suicide prevention through multiple lenses, providing attendees with insights into mental health, cultural barriers, and survivor resilience.

Among this year's distinguished speakers is Jennifer Johnson, who sits on the Board of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-Michigan Chapter and also serves as the Chairperson for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB), whose work focuses on addressing suicide within the Black community. Her advocacy stems from her personal experience with her godfather, who died by suicide in 1988, and a deep commitment to dismantling cultural taboos that hinder conversations about mental health.

"I'll talk about the whole scope of suicide among Black and African American communities. I just want to speak about that in general, and touch on how that relates with the State of Michigan," Johnson said.

"We'll go into understanding how a lot of the basis of this stems from racial and systemic factors, and it impacts our community in ways in which it doesn't impact other communities."

The statistics emphasize the urgency of Johnson's mission. In 2022, suicide was the third leading cause of death among Black or African Americans aged 10 to 24. Additionally, Black males experienced a suicide rate more than four times higher than Black females in 2020. Despite these sobering figures, the overall suicide rate for Black Americans remains 50% lower than that of the non-Hispanic white population.

However, young Black females face their own challenges. In 2021, Black girls in grades 9-12 were 60% more likely to attempt suicide than their non-Hispanic white peers. Johnson's work addresses these disparities by fostering culturally competent mental health resources and encouraging open dialogue in Black communities.

"That stigma we carry a lot of times is intergenerational trauma we've been carrying for years, even before we were born, and

trying to work through some of what we have encountered over the years in our communities, can be a challenge," Johnson said.

Kevin's Song was established in 2013 by Gail and John Urso, compassionate residents of Grosse Pointe who faced the devastating loss of their beloved son, Kevin, to suicide. In the years following this tragic event, the organization has evolved into a significant source of hope and support for countless individuals and families grappling with the effects of suicide.

Kevin's Song aims to raise awareness about mental health issues and provide valuable resources to those in need. Its annual conference has become a prominent event, attracting leading experts, mental health professionals, and passionate advocates from Michigan and across the nation. This collaborative gathering serves as a vital platform to discuss and address the complexities surrounding suicide prevention, intervention, and bereavement support. Through workshops, discussions, and networking opportunities, Kevin's Song fosters an environment where knowledge and experiences are shared, ultimately striving to reduce stigma and create a more supportive community for those impacted by suicide.

Kevin's Song's annual conference is a rallying point for Michigan residents and organizations to confront the suicide crisis together. From mental health professionals to survivors of suicide loss and attempt survivors, the event provides tools, resources, and hope to everyone involved.

The 2025 conference will provide a valuable opportunity for individuals to come together and exchange new ideas, all focused on making a meaningful impact in Michigan and beyond. This event will emphasize the importance of addressing the issue of suicide and will offer resources to support efforts in tackling this serious public health concern.

Suicide - The Most Misunderstood of all Deaths

Death is always painful, but its pains are compounded considerably if its cause is suicide.



Father Ron Rolheiser

When a suicide occurs, we aren't just left with the loss of a person, we're also left with a legacy of anger, second-guessing and fearful anxiety.

So each year I write a column on suicide, hoping that it might help produce more understanding around the issue and, in a small way perhaps, offer some consolation to those who have lost a loved one to this dreadful disease. Essentially, I say the same things each year because they need to be said. As Margaret Atwood once put it, some things need to be said and said and said again, until they don't need to be said any more. That's true of suicide.

What needs to be said, and said again, about it?

First of all that it's a disease and perhaps the most misunderstood of all diseases.

We tend to think that if a death is self-inflicted it is voluntary in a way that death through physical illness or accident is not. For most suicides, this isn't true. A person who falls victim to suicide dies, as does the victim of a terminal illness or fatal accident, not by his or her own choice. When people die from heart attacks, strokes, cancer, AIDS, and accidents, they die against their will. The same is true of suicide, except that in the case of suicide the breakdown is emotional rather than physical - an emotional stroke, an emotional cancer, a breakdown of the emotional immune system, an emotional fatality.

This is not an analogy. The two kinds of heart attacks, strokes, cancers, break-downs of the immune-system, and fatal accidents, are identical in that, in neither case, is the person leaving this world on the basis of a voluntary decision of his or her own will. In both cases, he or she is taken out of life against his or her own will. That's why we speak of someone as a "victim" of suicide.

Given this fact, we should not worry unduly about the eternal salvation of a suicide victim, believing (as we used to) that suicide is always an act of ultimate despair. God is infinitely more understanding than we are and God's hands are infinitely safer and more gentle than our own. Imagine a loving mother having just given birth, welcoming her child onto her breast for the first time. That, I believe is the best image we have available to understand how a suicide victim (most often an overly sensitive soul) is received into the next life.

Again, this isn't an analogy. God is infinitely more understanding, loving and motherly than any mother on earth.

We need not worry about the fate of anyone, no matter the cause of death, who exits this world honest, over-sensitive, gentle, over-wrought, and emotionally-crushed. God's understanding and compassion exceed our own.

Knowing all of this, however, doesn't necessarily take away our pain (and anger) at losing someone to suicide. Faith and understanding aren't meant to take our pain away but to give us hope, vision, and support as we walk within it.

Finally, we should not unduly second-guess when we lose a loved one to suicide: "What might I have done? If only I had been there? What if...?" It can be too easy to be haunted with the thought: "If only I'd been there at the right time." Rarely would this have made a difference. Indeed, most of the time, we weren't there for the exact reason that the person who fell victim to this disease did not want us to be there. He or she picked the moment, the spot, and the means precisely so that we wouldn't be there. Perhaps it's more accurate to say that suicide is a disease that picks its victim precisely in such a way so as to exclude others and their attentiveness. This should not be an excuse for insensitivity; especially towards those suffering from dangerous depression, but it should be a healthy check against false guilt and fruitless second-guessing.

We're human beings, not God. People die of illness and accidents all the time and all the love and attentiveness in the world often cannot prevent a loved one from dying. Suicide is a sickness. There are some sicknesses that all the care and love in the world cannot cure.

A proper human and faith response to suicide should not be horror, fear for the victim's eternal salvation, or guilty second-guessing about how we failed this person. Suicide is indeed a horrible way to die, but we must understand it (at least in most cases) as a sickness, a disease, an illness, a tragic breakdown within the emotional immune-system. And then we must trust, in God's goodness, God's understanding, God's power to descend into hell and God's power to redeem all things, even death, even death by suicide.

Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Father Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website, www.ronrolheiser.com. Facebook www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser

Faith Communities as Suicide Prevention Partners

Brandon Johnson, MHS; Melinda Moore, PhD

Faith communities are ideal settings to address suicide, promote help-seeking, and mobilize compassionate volunteers to support those who are struggling. To help develop capacity and begin conversations about suicide prevention in communities of faith, the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) Faith Communities Task Force has developed the *Faith.Hope.Life.* campaign and the National Weekend of Prayer for Faith, Hope, & Life. These efforts encourage all congregations, parishes, mosques, synagogues, temples, and other faith communities to pray for those individuals whose lives have been touched by suicide. Whether it is for a parishioner or congregant who is struggling with suicidal thoughts, a suicide attempt, or suicide loss, this simple act of prayer fosters hope, a sense of belongingness, and signals a supportive community willing to provide both spiritual and practical support. To help equip faith leaders with the skills to address suicide in their communities, the task force also recently developed *Suicide Prevention Competencies for Faith Leaders: Supporting Life Before, During, and After a Suicidal Crisis*. We encourage suicide prevention practitioners to share these resources and form key partnerships with faith communities, and for faith community members and leaders to become involved in the campaign.

Regular religious service attendance is common in the U.S., with as many as 49 percent of Americans saying they attend worship services monthly, compared to Western Europe, where only 22 percent attend at least once a month.¹ With their powerful reach, faith leaders are uniquely positioned to help reduce stigma and shape healthy norms related to suicide and mental health. Researcher Karen Mason has found time and again that faith leaders are particularly well suited to provide suicide supports:

More than any other professionals, pastors, chaplains and pastoral counselors minister at the intersection of theology and moral practice. They teach people to choose life. They provide guidance in how to build lives worth living. They teach how to manage suffering. They monitor and intervene when suicidal people come to them for help. They guide faith communities in how to support suicide survivors.³

Yet, not all faith leaders feel prepared to meet that challenge. A study of Minnesota clergy² found that 85 percent reported it was their role to educate their congregations about suicide and mental health, but 32 percent reported no or low ability to do so. Most respondents said that if concerned about a parishioner's mental health, they would inquire about suicidal thoughts, but fewer said they would inquire about suicidal intent. They simply did not feel they could or even realize it was within their role.

While the opportunity for clergy and faith leaders to address suicide may be great, navigating that task is not without challenges. Faith leaders need the skills to talk to suicidal congregants, find appropriate help, support families and friends after a suicide death, and conduct a funeral or memorial service

for someone who has died by suicide. That is in addition to addressing the ongoing spiritual needs of people of faith who have lost a loved one to suicide or who are struggling with suicidal thoughts or attempts. The task force's *Suicide Prevention Competencies for Faith Leaders: Supporting Life Before, During, and After a Suicidal Crisis* aims to equip faith leaders with these capabilities. This new resource presents feasible, practical, research-based actions that faith leaders can adopt immediately to help save lives and restore hope in faith communities nationwide. It was co-led by task force members Karen Mason (professor of counseling and psychology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) and Glen Bloomstrom (military director of LivingWorks Education) in consultation with leaders from diverse faith communities and national suicide prevention experts.

Faith leaders and communities may provide a variety of mental health supports to congregants, such as starting a mental health ministry, sponsoring a depression screening day, or providing a space for a suicide loss support group, as so many already do. The *Faith.Hope.Life.* campaign has a website full of resources for communities of faith, including sermon and prayer templates, bulletin inserts, resources for supporting suicidal individuals, and other valuable tools to help them in their efforts. With so much opportunity for support and healing, the task force encourages all faith communities and their leaders to join our mission as powerful partners in suicide prevention. We invite you to visit www.faith-hope-life.org. If you are involved in suicide prevention efforts at the state or local level, we encourage you to reach out to faith communities as key partners in your prevention efforts and share these resources with them.

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Melinda Moore is the private sector co-lead of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Faith Communities Task Force and assistant professor in the Eastern Kentucky University Department of Psychology.

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Comprehensive DBT for Suicidal Ideation: A Path to Healing

Written By:



North Texas
DBT Associates



Suicidal ideation is a deeply distressing experience, affecting individuals and families across all age groups. Whether you're a parent worried about your child, a spouse concerned about your partner, or someone personally struggling with suicidal thoughts, it's natural to feel overwhelmed and unsure about where to turn for help. Finding an evidence-based, effective treatment is crucial to navigating this difficult time.

One therapy that has proven to be particularly effective for individuals of all ages struggling with suicidal thoughts is Comprehensive Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Backed by decades of research, Comprehensive DBT offers a structured, supportive approach to help people manage their emotions, reduce suicidal ideation, and build a life worth living.

What Is Comprehensive DBT?

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) was developed in the late 1980s by Dr. Marsha Linehan to treat individuals with chronic suicidal behaviors and emotional dysregulation. Since its inception, DBT has been extensively researched and proven effective for a wide range of mental health issues, especially for those who struggle with emotional regulation, self-harm, and suicidal ideation.

While many therapists offer DBT-informed treatments, it's essential to recognize the difference between DBT-informed therapy and Comprehensive DBT. A fully comprehensive DBT program incorporates several crucial components, which work together to create lasting change. Research published in *JAMA Psychiatry* (2018) emphasizes that Comprehensive DBT can significantly reduce suicidal ideation in individuals when all elements of the therapy are implemented.

The Core Components of Comprehensive DBT

Comprehensive DBT is a multifaceted treatment designed to help individuals build emotional resilience and better cope with distressing thoughts and feelings. At its core, Comprehensive DBT includes the following four components:

1. Individual Therapy

In individual DBT therapy, clients work one-on-one with a trained DBT therapist to explore their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. The therapist helps the individual identify patterns of emotional dysregulation and teaches specific DBT skills to manage those emotions effectively. By working through personal challenges in a supportive setting, clients develop the ability to manage distress without resorting to harmful behaviors or thoughts.

2. Skills Training Group

A key feature of Comprehensive DBT is the DBT skills training group. In this group setting, clients learn and practice essential skills in four key areas:

- **Mindfulness:** This skill set focuses on increasing awareness of the present moment and reducing emotional reactivity.
- **Distress Tolerance:** Clients are taught techniques to cope with intense emotions and crises without making harmful decisions.
- **Emotion Regulation:** These skills help individuals identify, understand, and manage their emotions before they become overwhelming.
- **Interpersonal Effectiveness:** This involves learning how to communicate more effectively, set boundaries, and build healthier relationships.

By practicing these skills in a group setting, individuals not only develop crucial tools for emotional regulation but also find a supportive community of peers facing similar challenges.

3. Phone Coaching

A distinguishing feature of Comprehensive DBT is phone coaching, which allows clients to access their therapist between sessions. This support is available in real-time when clients face challenging situations and need help applying DBT skills. The goal is to help individuals manage crises as they arise, reducing the risk of impulsive or harmful behaviors.

4. Therapist Consultation Team

Therapists providing Comprehensive DBT are supported by a consultation team. This team-based approach ensures that therapists remain grounded in DBT principles and receive the guidance and support necessary to provide high-quality, consistent care. It also reduces the risk of burnout for therapists, allowing them to stay fully engaged in their clients' treatment.

How Does Comprehensive DBT Help Reduce Suicidal Ideation?

Suicidal thoughts often arise when individuals feel overwhelmed by emotions they can't control. Comprehensive DBT teaches people how to manage these emotions by using practical, evidence-based skills. The study published in JAMA Psychiatry highlights that individuals who undergo DBT experience a significant reduction in suicidal ideation and behaviors because the therapy addresses the root causes of emotional distress.

Through DBT, clients learn that their emotions, while powerful, do not have to dictate their actions. By understanding the connection between their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, individuals can disrupt harmful patterns and replace them with healthier coping mechanisms. DBT provides a roadmap to building a life where distress can be managed effectively and without resorting to dangerous or self-destructive behaviors.

Who Can Benefit from Comprehensive DBT?

One of the strengths of DBT is its adaptability for various populations. While it was initially developed to treat adults with borderline personality disorder and chronic suicidality, DBT has since been successfully applied to a range of groups, including:

Teens and Adolescents: DBT is especially effective for young people dealing with intense emotional dysregulation, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. The structured nature of DBT provides them with tools they can apply in everyday life.

Adults: Whether struggling with mood disorders, substance use, or other mental health challenges, adults experiencing suicidal ideation or emotional dysregulation can benefit from Comprehensive DBT's systematic approach.

Children and Families: DBT can be adapted for younger children with emotional regulation challenges, and family members can be included in the therapy process to create a supportive environment at home.

Regardless of age or background, anyone who feels overwhelmed by their emotions or is at risk of harming themselves can benefit from the structured support of Comprehensive DBT.

The Importance of Comprehensive DBT for Suicidal Ideation

When it comes to managing suicidal ideation, the comprehensive nature of DBT is critical. By combining individual therapy, skills training, real-time coaching, and therapist collaboration, DBT addresses the multiple facets of emotional and behavioral health. It's not just about managing crises—it's about preventing them by equipping individuals with lifelong skills to handle life's challenges.

Research consistently shows that Comprehensive DBT is one of the most effective treatments for reducing suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The JAMA Psychiatry study found that individuals who received Comprehensive DBT had significantly lower rates of suicidal behaviors compared to those who received other forms of therapy. This highlights the importance of seeking out a full DBT program when addressing suicidal ideation.

Seeking Comprehensive DBT

If you or a loved one is struggling with suicidal thoughts, it's essential to seek out a treatment program that offers the full range of DBT services. While DBT-informed therapy can be beneficial, Comprehensive DBT provides the highest level of care by integrating all the necessary components that contribute to lasting change.

At North Texas DBT Associates, we specialize in Comprehensive DBT for people of all ages, including children, teens, and adults. Our highly trained therapists provide individualized care tailored to meet the specific needs of each client. We believe in the transformative power of DBT and are committed to helping individuals create lives worth living, free from the weight of suicidal ideation.

Final Thoughts

Suicidal ideation can be an overwhelming and frightening experience, but with the right treatment, healing is possible. Comprehensive DBT offers a structured, evidence-based approach to help individuals manage their emotions, reduce suicidal thoughts, and build a more fulfilling life. No matter your age or the challenges you face, Comprehensive DBT provides the skills and support necessary to move forward with hope and resilience.

If you're interested in learning more about Comprehensive DBT or exploring how it might help you or a loved one, don't hesitate to contact North Texas DBT Associates. Together, we can work toward a brighter, more hopeful future.

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Suicide Prevention — Pastors' Role or Another Item on Their Plate?

Written By:

Glen Bloomstrom

*Op-Ed Contributor VOICES -
Saturday, September 04, 2021*



There is no doubt that ministry leaders have a lot on their plates. They were already busy before the pandemic hit. Since then, it's common to hear how Covid-19 has intensified the challenges that pastors face in caring for their church members and their community at large.

Isolation, job loss, financial stress, personal and emotional issues, and even political conflict have people reaching out to pastors for help or just leaving their congregation altogether. Faith leaders are feeling the pinch, and even dealing with some of their own stresses and struggles in these unprecedented times.

Suicide rates in the U.S. continue to rise, and with the pandemic bringing isolation and detachment from others, those who battle depression have been left to themselves with little intervention.

The church is not exempt from this phenomenon. Sadly, we have seen mental health issues and suicide rates climb among the pastorate as well.

But suicide ideation has been an issue that has often been a silent disease, especially in our churches, and well before COVID-19 ever hit our shores. Why is this? In many cases, when congregants take a big step forward to admit their struggles to a faith leader, they are surprised by the discomfort or the awkwardness they see in their spiritual leader's response to their transparency and are sorely disappointed when their

pastor simply refers them to someone else. They leave feeling embarrassed, exposed, or at worst, betrayed. These reactions have enabled people to keep their masks in place when speaking to ministry leaders or in places of worship. After all, it's better to not share too much and be perceived as deficient or lacking faith.

On the other side of the ministry leader's office, is a belief that mental health and especially suicide prevention are not in their lane. The topic is complex, time-consuming, and terrifying. Clergy see suicide prevention as something for others to do instead of them. But the reality is that faith leaders are the first stopgap in helping those with suicide ideation.

I see the church and faith community as a key reinforcement to the increasing number of people struggling with suicidal thoughts in our society.

True, faith leaders, ministry volunteers and people of faith are not licensed therapists. That said, anyone can be trained to listen and ask some basic questions to save the life of someone who is struggling. You don't need a thoracic surgeon at the onset of a heart attack, but you do need someone trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to save a life. The same is true with suicide.

For the past 20 years suicide death rates have continued to rise by nearly a third. Youth, veterans, and middle-aged men are increasingly attempting suicide and dying by their own hands.

More people need to be involved in the prevention of suicide, and faith communities could be a key reinforcing community element.

What stands in the way of people reaching out and getting help? Stigma.

Stigma is that feeling of having a deficiency, a mark, stain, or scar that is so self-evident that it must be so hidden. People who have experienced suicidal thoughts and ideations carry these self-perceptions and assume others look at them “as lesser than,” “crazy,” or “mentally ill.” Their shame is reinforced, tragically, by others treating them differently or by maintaining silence because they do not know what to say. This in turn reinforces the belief that they are worthy of being shunned.

Many people are sitting in the pews on Sunday who have been exposed to suicide or have lost friends and family to suicide — however, the topic rarely comes up in places of worship. This fact is consistently affirmed in my work with people of faith and leaders who are honest enough to admit that they are fearful of the topic should it arise in counseling. All these behaviors maintain stigma and reinforce the perception that any references to suicide are off the table.

So, what should a pastor and faith leader do?

Leaders can begin by simply including the topic of suicidal desperation in congregational prayers and messages. When done compassionately, this can increase understanding and help congregants to see those suicidal thoughts are a consequence of being human. This simple prevention practice is a powerful and helpful first step.

Such references do not encourage suicide or undermine a biblical and theological belief that God is both the giver and the ultimate taker of life. It is saying to those struggling that they do not need to be shamed into isolation but instead, are welcomed to share their desperation with a caring person. Without such a conversation, those in this cycle of suicidal thought are trapped and alone, eventually concluding that suicide is the only way out.

A second step is training. A natural solution is to mobilize members, specifically those who have the experience, healing, and desire to advocate for others, to be trained in suicide CPR skills to recognize and respond accordingly when they sense someone may be struggling. When trained helpers learn how to listen to the death thoughts of those who are feeling hopeless and despondent, the life thoughts of the individual are given a chance to emerge and be supported. These nuanced approaches to listening can be taught and practiced.

Finally, leaders themselves need to be trained in advanced intervention skills and have clear protocols to help struggling members of their congregation.

It is not only congregational and community members who may be in the cycle of suicidal desperation and stigma. Indeed, ministry leaders under great stress have been more candid about thoughts of leaving the ministry, self-medicating, and even contemplating suicide. A recent study indicated that one in ten ministry leaders considered suicide during the pandemic.

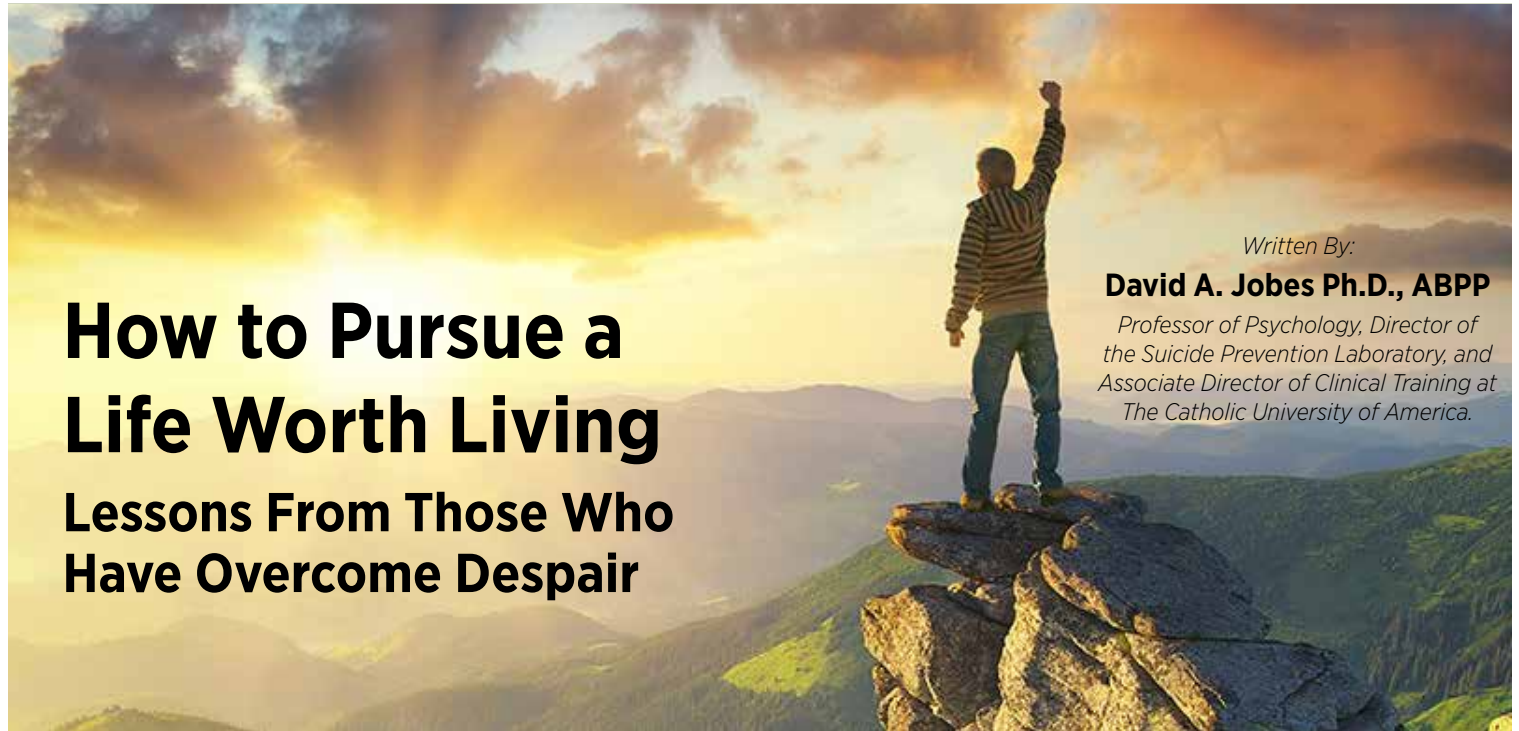
When sincere people of faith and their leaders are deeply invested in relationships, they will be approached about suicide. It is human to need others for support. The deconstruction of stigma must be the first step. Training is the second.

As with CPR, suicide intervention skills need not be another task only for ministry leaders. Congregation members with lived experience know firsthand the pain and impact of not seeking help. These are our most powerful advocates and potential congregational leaders.

I’ve learned from my many years serving as a Chaplain, and now leading a faith-based suicide prevention training ministry, that the support of trained faith leaders to better respond to those struggling with suicidal thoughts will indeed save lives.

I believe the faith community can make a vital difference in their congregations and in their communities in curbing the rising suicide rate in our nation. Let’s work together to do that.





How to Pursue a Life Worth Living

Lessons From Those Who Have Overcome Despair

Written By:

David A. Jobes Ph.D., ABPP

Professor of Psychology, Director of the Suicide Prevention Laboratory, and Associate Director of Clinical Training at The Catholic University of America.

Key Points:

- We can learn many lessons about living from studying those who consider suicide.
- The question of what makes life worth living is an eternal and important question worthy of our consideration.
- Living intentionally, with meaningful plans, goals, and hope for the future is critical to fulfillment.
- Meaningful work, love, and play can become an important “mission” to fully realizing a life worth living.

“Okay Doc, I got it... my new mission is to not kill myself! But honestly, I still have a big problem: I don’t exactly know how to live?”

So said “Sam” to his clinical provider as the dyad met within a 12-session course of suicide-focused care, having now met operational criteria for resolving his suicidal risk. As a 23-year-old U.S. Army Infantry Soldier, Sam was a patient-participant in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS), which is an evidence-based suicide-focused clinical intervention (Jobes, 2023). Within the Suicide Prevention Lab (SPL) that I direct at The Catholic University of America, we are engaged in large RCTs of CAMS across different clinical settings and with different clinical populations of patients who are actively suicidal. Within our research, SPL members watch dozens of videos each week across various RCTs to evaluate providers’ adherence to CAMS and ascertain overall treatment fidelity. As I personally watched this resolution session of CAMS with Sam,

I felt a mixture of relief and a lingering concern. To be honest, when Sam was first engaged in CAMS, he was extremely worrisome. There were nights when I literally lay awake in bed worrying about the prospect of Sam ending his life and the potential threat to his commander and members for whom he harbored serious homicidal feelings.

Sam had been deployed several times to Afghanistan and Iraq where he had engaged in fierce tours of combat. His two closest friends had been killed adjacent to him and he had been involved in countless bloody firefight. Returning from his last deployment, Sam was enraged at his commander and resented members of his unit that he felt did not have his back in combat.

Fortunately, as we see with such patients so engaged in CAMS, Sam made steady progress on his self-identified suicidal “drivers” (CAMS parlance for what causes suicidal risk). Sam’s drivers centered on acute symptoms of PTSD and the prospect of losing custody of his two young children in a divorce battle with his estranged wife. In relatively short order, Sam’s intense emotions became more regulated as he responded to prolonged exposure for PTSD. In addition, spiritual direction from an Army chaplain also helped him deal with an emerging sense of moral injury. Sam’s CAMS provider also helped engage an Army JAG attorney to represent him in the custody litigation. Contacts made with the VA also set the stage for Sam to leave the Army and transition back into civilian life. In his resolution session, Sam still had some lingering suicidal ideation. But he had become quite skilled at managing his suicidal thoughts and feelings and realizing behavioral stability.

As I watched, I was pleased with Sam's clinical resolution, but I nevertheless had a nagging concern related to Sam's statement that *he did not know how to live*.

My treatment research mentor, Dr. Marsha Linehan (the developer of dialectical behavior therapy, or DBT) famously espoused the importance of developing a life worth living. Within the CAMS framework, we fully embrace this notion—particularly as treatment draws to a close, when the importance of reasons for living, and the development of plans, goals, and hope for the future (i.e., a life worth living) are emphasized.

The Basics:

- **Suicide Risk Factors and Signs**
- **Take our Depression Test**
- **Find counselling near me**

Nonetheless, as I watched Sam's resolution session in the lab, I knew that he had no guidebook for knowing how to live. Sam had been born into a broken and dysfunctional family. Sam's father was an abusive alcoholic who was killed in a bar fight when Sam was a teenager. He had no positive role models and he never gave much thought to his future during his teen years.

When his high school girlfriend got pregnant, they quickly got married and Sam promptly enlisted in the Army at age 18 to support his young family; he did not know what else to do. Sam was soon deployed after basic training and his shaky marriage was never stable, yet they conceived a second unplanned child between his deployments. Sam clearly took pride in the successful resolution of CAMS—but while suicide may have been clinically averted, how indeed would he ever know how to develop and live a life worth living?

In the ensuing years, I have become engrossed with the “psychology of life” and what makes life worth living. I have studied philosophers, theologians, and research of various psychologists. As for the latter, I have long admired the work of Carol Dweck (2016) who developed and then investigated the construct of mindsets that can be either “fixed” or “growth” oriented. In turn, Angela Duckworth's (2016) work on grit has been interesting as she studied the importance of perseverance and passion for a greater good in the world.

British novelist Matt Haig (2020) came perilously close to taking his own life, but he recovered and has written best sellers, including *The Midnight Library*, which is the extraordinary journey of a talented and yet hapless woman who lives a life defined by regret for having failed to make decisive choices. After overdosing Nora (the protagonist) finds

herself in a magical midnight library where every book is a different story of a possible life she might live.

From a scholarly perspective, Emily Esfahani Smith (2017) writes in *The Power of Meaning* that we endlessly and fruitlessly seek happiness when having a sense of meaning is what makes life worth living. Sam the soldier had sparked in me an earnest desire to better understand what makes life worth living, brimming with purpose and meaning.

Ironically, after 40+ years in suicidology, I have come to know a bit about life by studying those who feel compelled to end it. What we know from our investigations is that people who are suicidal usually are existentially struggling with a few key topics: relationship issues, vocations (what they do in life), and their sense of self (e.g., self-hate). Problems related to these domains are invariably implicated within our assessment and driver-oriented treatment research.

When we pull together all these various considerations, we can begin to operationally define what seems to make life worth living. The accumulated takeaway thus far? *There is value in living life with conscious intent, pursuing one's self-defined plans and goals, and discovering meaningful work, love, and play.* While I have neither personally nor professionally figured it all out, I believe that the pursuit of a life worth living can become both a compelling and worthwhile mission for us all.

If you or someone you love is contemplating suicide, seek help immediately. For help 24/7 in the U.S., dial 988 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or reach out to the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741. Outside of the U.S., visit our International Resources page for suicide hotlines in your country. To find a therapist near you, visit the Psychology Today Therapy Directory.

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- Note: The case of Sam is an amalgamation of several soldiers in the RCT.



Purpose in Life: A Remedy for Preventing Suicide

Written By:

Elizabeth A. Medeiros

“

To do suicide prevention well, we have to do more than just stop people from dying—we also have to make life worth living.

Dr. Craig Bryan
Rethinking Suicide

Today's Marines and sailors face a daunting battle. Death by suicide in the U.S. armed forces has seen a steady increase since 2011, making it the second-leading cause of death among all military service members. Suicide has been designated a national security crisis and service members identified as a high-risk group, yet suicide rates have

not significantly declined despite increased awareness and investments by the Department of Defense (DoD). However, there is a path forward. One proposed strategy is to aim prevention efforts at the community level and encourage service members' pursuit of purpose and meaning through supportive leadership and unit cohesion.

By its nature, suicide is difficult to address. Tackling one cause often unveils another, unexpected problem. This is especially important to understand when examining major contributors of stress for service member — including legal problems, victimization, financial trouble, interpersonal issues, and separation/divorce — all of which have been associated with suicide attempts. Unfortunately, mental illness and individual-level treatment remain the focus of suicide prevention efforts, even though research shows that nearly half of service members who die by suicide have no history of mental illness, and the root cause of suicide goes beyond mental health.¹

Lives Worth Living

So, how does one better understand why some Marines do not die by suicide despite facing adversity? First, consider a person's belief about what makes a life worth living. Philosopher Dr. Frank Martela and psychologist Dr. Michael F. Steger concluded:

In order to live in the world as reflective beings, humans seem to need three things: they need to comprehend the world around them, they need to find direction for their actions, and they need to find worth in their lives.

Lives worth living can be shaped by two main ideas: coherence, or clarity and the ability to make sense in one's life, and purpose, or having core goals and direction. Helping Marines and sailors understand that they have direction, meaning, and purpose in both their lives and their roles in the military should be a critical element of suicide prevention efforts. Although joining the armed forces can instill a sense of purpose and meaning, there are likely still some Marines who have questions or challenges in these areas. A strong sense of purpose is associated with a reduction in suicidal ideation. Viktor E. Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist and concentration camp survivor, found that those with a "will of meaning" (Der Wille zum Sinn) were more likely to survive in the camps.²

A recent study of hospital patients admitted for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts found that family, social support, and interpersonal connectedness are elements strongly connected to meaning in life and can be leveraged to protect against suicidal behaviors. Dr. Craig Bryan, a former Air Force psychologist and suicidology researcher, suggested treatments that foster a sense of meaning and self-compassion could give service members a buffer against the emergence of suicidal thoughts and behaviors and support an improved overall sense of resiliency, health, and well-being. Furthermore, happiness and meaning can encourage a sense of coherence and positive coping mechanisms, leading to better mental health outcomes.

Leadership's Role

Military leaders are uniquely positioned to promote health and well-being among service members and enhance unit cohesion. After all, creating lives worth living is not an individual feat, but rather an organization working together with collective responsibility. Service members who feel valued and important help build strong social networks and a sense of belonging among their comrades, which can increase resilience and reduce suicide risk and ideation. Furthermore, high levels of unit cohesion play a role in military performance, combat readiness, and resilience against PTSD and depression.

Time spent discussing the purpose of military service with subordinates can increase their sense of belonging and is associated with less severe suicidal ideation. Notably, the DoD Suicide Prevention Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) found that supportive and transformational leadership were top factors in suicide prevention; when such leadership was absent, service members felt vulnerable and prone to low morale and self-worth, which are associated with a higher suicide risk. In other words, leaders who highlight purpose and foster a cohesive unit are critical to reducing suicidal behaviors.

Opportunities for Change

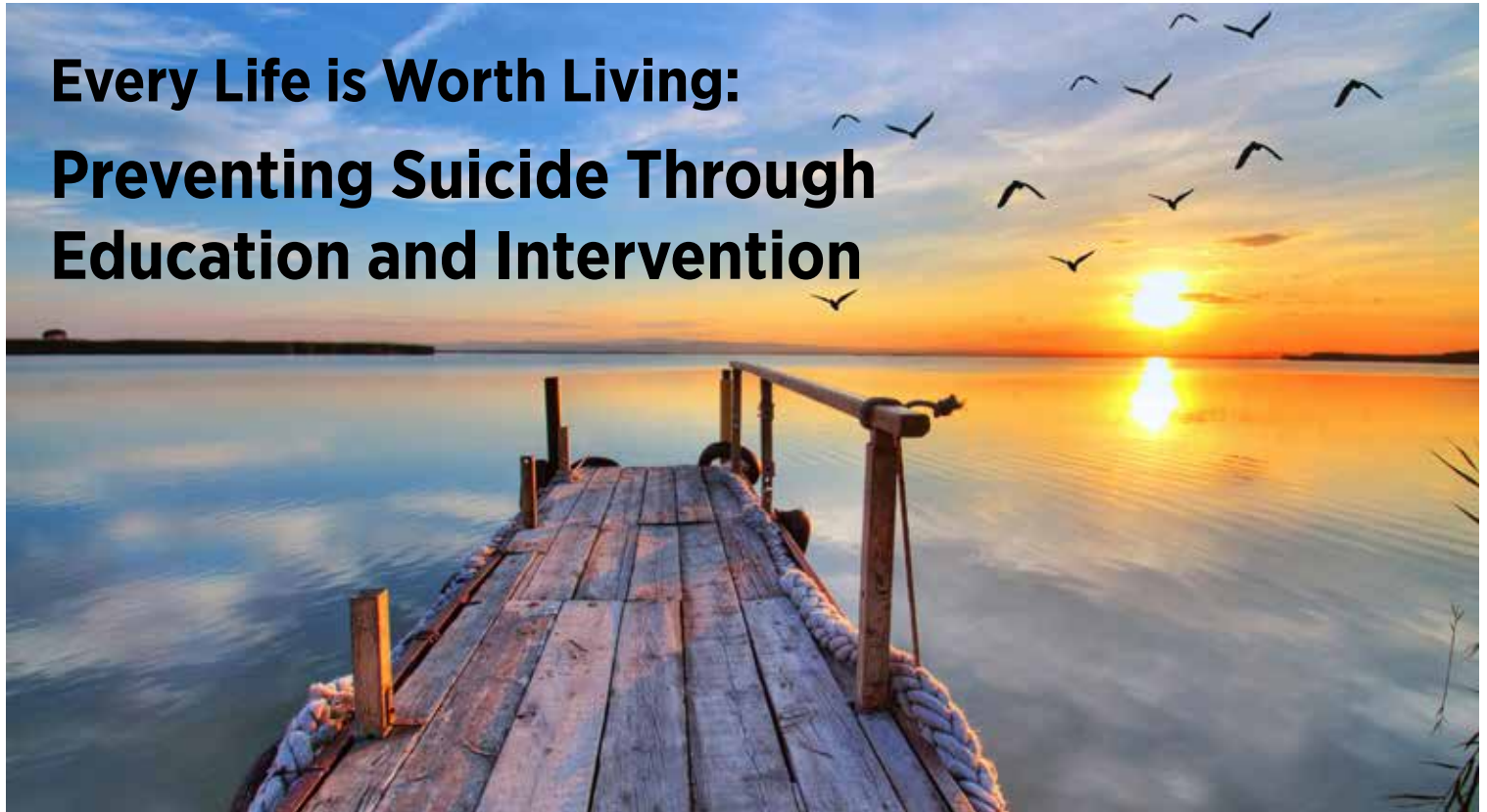
The SPRIRC found that preventing suicide is difficult in the military "in part because many of its own systems, rules, and cultural norms get in the way of well-intentioned efforts that inadvertently create stress in the daily lives of service members and family." These findings, along with support from suicidology experts, signal the urgent need to recalculate current methods. Marine Corps leaders have daily opportunities to influence their subordinates by engaging with each service member in their units. They can support, connect, inspire, and reinforce meaning and purpose in the lives of their subordinates. If these approaches are paired with the Marine Corps' current efforts to encourage help-seeking behaviors, it could have a profound effect on reducing the risk of suicide among service members.

The DoD-funded Airman's Edge peer-to-peer suicide prevention program could offer a model for future efforts. The program is designed to move Air Force culture toward improved health and well-being and could potentially be adapted by the Marine Corps. This program focuses on upstream crisis prevention of suicidal events, reducing the need for specialized individual-level treatment (for which resources can be scarce), and lessening the stigma against seeking care. By intentionally building purpose, making meaning, cultivating unit cohesion, and improving morale, this program aims to eliminate conditions that can hinder one from enjoying a high quality of life.

Marines and sailors have been facing a crisis of purpose and meaning for years. Luckily, we have the necessary tools and understanding to support them in developing a sense of purpose, meaning, and connections with their leaders. Suicide prevention teams are needed to serve Marines and sailors—we cannot fail them.

1. Craig J. Bryan, *Rethinking Suicide: Why Prevention Fails, and How We Can Do Better* (Oxford University Press, 2021).
2. Viktor Frankl, *A Man's Search for Meaning: From Death-Camp to Existentialism, An Introduction to Logotherapy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1946).

Every Life is Worth Living: Preventing Suicide Through Education and Intervention



Michigan Medicine – University of Michigan – Department of Psychiatry. September 11, 2023. Used with Permission

National Suicide Prevention Week is a reminder of the importance of fostering a compassionate and supportive society and is designed to raise awareness about suicide and its impact, as well as highlight the importance of suicide prevention and risk mitigation as a collective responsibility to support the safety and well-being of our communities.

It serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of fostering a compassionate and supportive society.

During National Suicide Prevention Week, numerous organizations, health professionals and communities come together to shed light on signs, symptoms and strategies to prevent suicide.

Suicide Warning Signs

Recognizing the warning signs and risk factors of suicide is crucial for early identification of risk and timely intervention. Being attentive to changes in a person's demeanor and maintaining open lines of communication can help in identifying these distress signals.

Individuals who are struggling with suicidal thoughts can exhibit warning signs or 'red flags' such as:

- ***Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness***
- ***Mood swings or worsening irritability***
- ***Sudden shifts in behavior***

- ***Withdrawing from social activities***
- ***Giving away possessions***
- ***Making statements that indicate a desire to die or expressing a sense of being a burden to others***
- ***Increased substance use***

Providing Support

Supporting a loved one who is struggling with suicidal thoughts demands sensitivity, empathy and proactive engagement.

You can support individuals expressing suicidal thoughts or behaviors by:

- ***Listening without judgment, while expressing concern and offering a safe space for them to share their feelings can make a significant difference.***
- ***Encouraging individuals to seek professional help from therapists, counselors, or mental health professionals or dedicated hotlines, such as the national 988 crisis line.***
- ***In some cases, accompanying loved ones to appointments or assisting in finding appropriate resources can alleviate feelings of isolation or loneliness.***
- ***Staying connected and involved in the journey to recovery, even when a loved one may seem distant or struggles to engage in care, sends a powerful message that they are not alone.***

Suicide Prevention Research at University of Michigan

Researchers at Michigan Medicine are advancing suicide prevention through their dedicated research and initiatives.

Their collaborative efforts encompass a wide range of studies and programs aimed at understanding the complexities of suicide risk factors, prevention strategies and mental health interventions. Examples include:

Developing and testing suicide prevention approaches for those who struggle with substance use

Mark Ilgen, Ph.D., has worked with colleagues at Michigan Medicine and in the Department of Veterans Affairs to test the effects of a form of structured psychotherapy, called Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Suicide Prevention, on suicide risk among individuals who are experiencing difficulties related to substance use. This work has evolved over time from conducting clinical trials of this intervention to working to expand access to this form of treatment in real world settings.

Increasing comfort with help-seeking during high-risk periods

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline services have the potential to save lives but are often underutilized by individuals when they are experiencing an acute suicidal crisis. Ilgen and colleagues developed a novel brief intervention, called Crisis Line Facilitation, to help increase comfort and willingness to use crisis services.

An initial trial of this one-session intervention found that it decreased the likelihood of future suicidal behaviors following an episode of inpatient psychiatric care. The team is currently in the process of testing the potential benefits of this intervention in different high-risk groups, including individuals receiving alcohol treatment and Michigan National Guard Service members.

The Youth and Young Adult Depression and Suicide Prevention Research Program is conducting research to develop improved screening, risk assessment, and prevention/intervention strategies. Their work includes several research projects such as:

- **Youth-Nominated Support Team Intervention (YST):**

YST is a psychoeducational, social support program developed by Dr. Cheryl King and her team across multiple grant initiatives. It is a 3-month program for youth at risk for suicide following their discharge from a healthcare facility. This program pairs adolescents with supportive adults who provide them with education, resources, and support to facilitate the youth's positive behavioral choices, treatment adherence, and healthy outcomes. YST has been associated with improved treatment follow-through and reduced self-injury mortality. Multiple initiatives are underway to further develop YST and understand its potential benefits.

- **24-Hour Warning Signs for Adolescent Suicide Attempts:**

The project, developed by Cheryl King, Ph.D., and her team, is designed to identify the warning signs that are associated with near-term risk for suicide. The researchers also hope to determine why a patient attempted suicide on a given day versus a day without a suicide attempt in order to identify differences between suicide attempters and non-attempters in events, behaviors, emotions and cognitions during the 24-hour case window.

- **Transforming Youth Suicide Prevention in Michigan-3 SAMHSA Grant Program:**

In collaboration with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, researchers and clinicians from the Michigan Medicine Department of Psychiatry, Psychiatric Emergency Services, and the University of Michigan School of Social Work have partnered to enhance the availability of suicide prevention best practices in communities across the state. Led by Cynthia Ewell Foster, Ph.D., these efforts include enhanced training in suicide prevention skills for Michigan's Child Welfare workforce and Michigan's Youth Suicide Prevention Emergency Department Network, a statewide community of practice aimed at improving the quality of care for youth and families experiencing acute suicide risk.

- **WeCARE: A System of Care for Black Youth at Risk for Suicide:**

King, together with Michael Lindsey at the NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research and Pamela Morris-Perez of NYU Steinhardt's ARCADIA for Suicide Prevention, have been awarded a NIMH-funded R01 research grant to study the effectiveness of a system of care for Black youth with suicide risk who present for emergency services.

Although suicide prevention is a year-round responsibility, National Suicide Prevention Week gives us the opportunity to create greater awareness, understanding and education of evidence-based strategies and approaches to identify suicide risk early, prevent progression to suicide and intervene with compassion to save lives and support those impacted by suicidal thoughts and behaviors.





Healing Starts at Trinity Health Michigan

Trinity Health cares about those struggling with mental health issues and substance use disorders.

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- Psychiatry and Counseling
- Psychiatric Access in the Emergency Department
- Inpatient Psychiatric Services
- Mental Health Intensive Outpatient and Partial Hospitalization Programs



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SUICIDE RISK
Care Competencies for Mental Health Professionals



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Hope Network has made a commitment to improving the care we provide to the people and communities we serve who are struggling with mental health and suicidal thoughts. Our evidence-based mental health and suicide prevention trainings will give you some of the skills needed to help save the life of someone in a mental health crisis. **Want to make a difference? Scan the code and join the 6,000+ people across the globe who have already been trained by our certified team of trainers.**

What is T.A.S.K.S. You Ask?

Training and Awareness on Suicide from Kevin's Song

As a community of health care professionals and educators, we all have T.A.S.K.S. to do in order to help save lives and prevent suicide whenever possible.

While the field of suicidology is not an exact science, and it is difficult to predict who will end their lives, we are amassing more and more scientific, evidence-based information that can help put a stop to such tragic losses in our communities.

This Recognition is something extra we are providing to qualifying attendees at our annual Kevin's Song Conference on Suicide. The Conference on Suicide and School Summit offer a comprehensive program of educational sessions that focus on suicide.

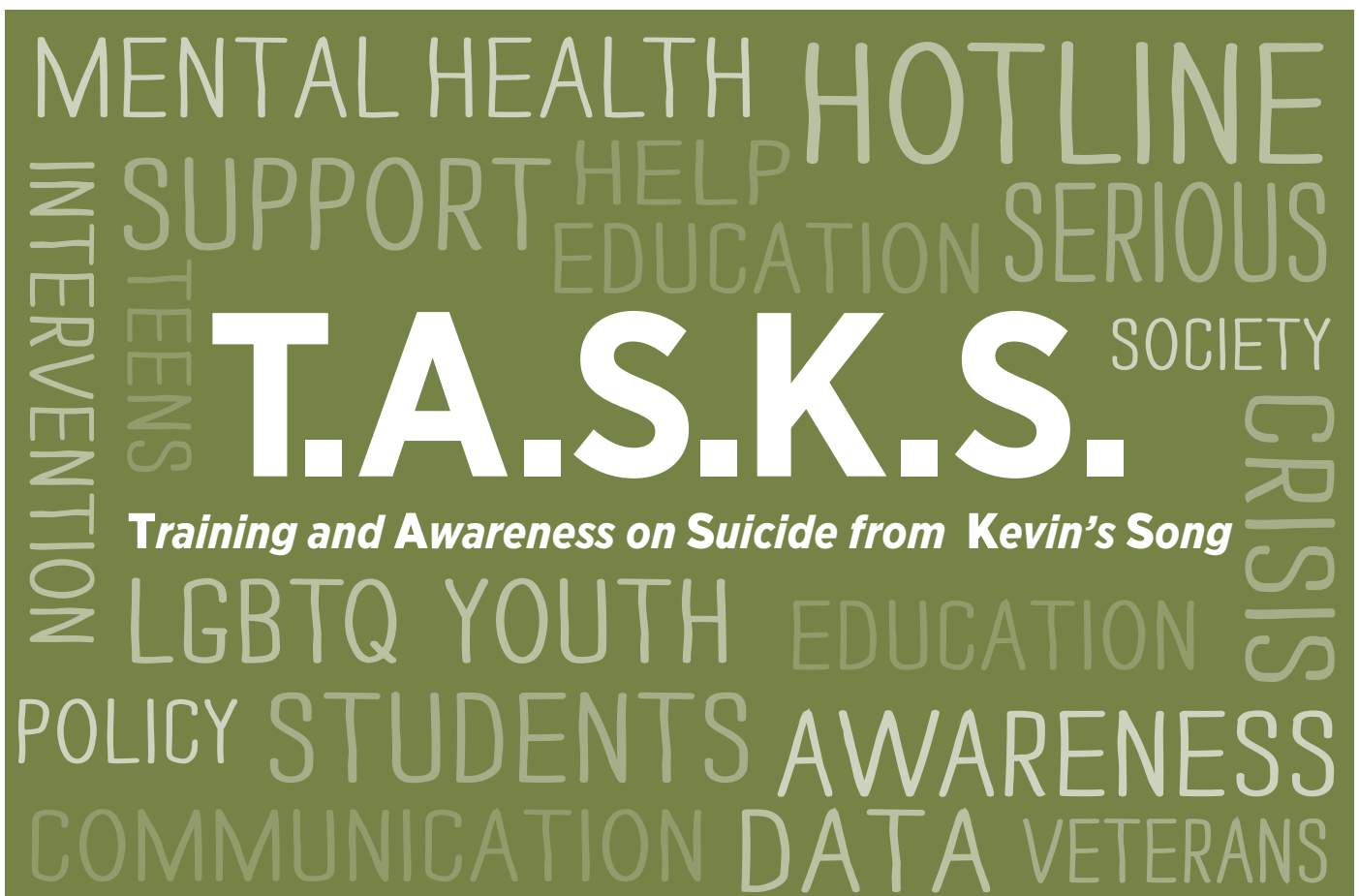
Kevin's Song will send the certificate to you *after* the conference.

To Become Qualified for T.A.S.K.S. Recognition:

- *You must be a licensed health care professional or educator.*
- *You will be required to attend every KEYNOTE SESSION.*
- *At least two (2) Breakout sessions each day of the 2-Day Conference.*
- *You must complete and submit session evaluations for each session and the post event feedback form you will receive by email after the conference.*
- *You must also complete and submit the TASKS form which will be emailed to you following the Conference.*

Processing of the T.A.S.K.S. Certificate will be handled by MPHI and will be received by email after the conference

Not only will you earn CEUs, you will receive a Certificate for your office, certifying to your colleagues and to the community that you have attended this comprehensive 2-Day conference with its focus on suicide - awareness, research, prevention and treatment.



Continuing Education Credits

2025 KEVIN'S SONG CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE

Continuing Education opportunities for this activity have been jointly provided by Kevin's Song and MPHI.

IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

PLEASE NOTE: CREDIT WILL NOT BE AWARDED UNLESS ALL CRITERIA IS MET

- Participants requesting credit must be registered for the event and have verified attendance.
- Attend at least one session during the conference (see additional details below). Credits will be given based on your attendance at sessions. If you have verified attendance in all sessions, you will receive the credit amounts shown on the Purpose, Objectives, and Disclosure (POD) document.
- **TO RECEIVE CE HOURS, YOU MUST COMPLETE THE EVALUATION:**
 - You will receive an email with an evaluation link on 1/27/25. Be sure to check your junk mail area if you don't see it. If you have not received this by 1/30/25, please contact CEInfo@mphi.org for next steps.
 - The evaluation will stay open until 2/09/25.
- Certificates are immediately generated upon the completion of the evaluation. You will be able to download the PDF certificate from the submission page and a copy will also be sent to your email.
 - We do not keep an archive of past certificates, so please retain a copy for your records.

Direct any questions to: CEInfo@mphi.org

ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION

When you arrive at the conference, check in at the registration desk.

You will be entering your name into our new name badge system and printing a label that can then be added to the badge placard.

When you generate a name badge, it will also check you into the conference and verify your attendance.

We are not requiring session check in. Any CE hours will be generated based on the sessions you say you attended in registration.

SCECH CE CREDITS

If you are looking for SCECH credits, you will be required to complete an attestation form that needs to be signed by a registration desk representative.

EVALUATION INSTRUCTIONS

We request that all participants complete the evaluation. Your feedback provides important information on conference presenters and sessions. You can also provide feedback on the overall conference so that we can make improvements for future years.

TO RECEIVE CE HOURS, YOU MUST COMPLETE THE EVALUATION

You will receive an email with an evaluation link on 1/27/25. Be sure to check your junk mail area if you don't see it. If you have not received your email link by 1/30/25, contact CEInfo@mphi.org for next steps.

The evaluation will stay open until 2/09/25.



You Can Find Complete Information About Continuing Education At The Registration Desk.

AVAILABLE CONTINUING EDUCATION:

Nursing Contact Hours Designation

A total of **12 Nursing Contact Hours** have been awarded for this activity by the Michigan Public Health Institute - Continuing Education Solutions (MPHI CES 202908751)

Michigan Public Health Institute-Continuing Education Solutions (MPHI-CES) is approved as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the Louisiana State Nurses Association - Approver, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

Social Work Clock Hours Designation

A total of **12 Social Work Clock Hours** have been awarded for this activity by the Michigan Public Health Institute - Continuing Education Solutions.

This course is approved by the Michigan Social Work Continuing Education Collaborative - Approval #MICEC-0042

State of Michigan Teachers (SCECH)

A maximum of **12 State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs)** have been awarded by Macomb Intermediate School District. (Approval # 172466)

Alcohol/Drug Counselor Designation (MCBAP)

A total of **12 Contact Hours** have been awarded for this activity by MCBAP. Trainings have been identified as SPECIFIC or RELATED to Substance Abuse in the session information on the CE Document.

Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) though NBCC

A total of **8 Hours** have been awarded for this activity by NBCC. The 9th Annual Conference on Suicide has been approved by NBCC for NBCC credit. Sessions approved for NBCC credit are clearly identified Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) is solely responsible for all aspects of the program. NBCC Approval No. SP-4756.

OTHER Healthcare Professionals

12 Educational hours for **OTHER Healthcare Professionals** (Certificate of Completion)

Educational hours for all disciplines will be based on the sessions you report as attending in the post-event evaluation.

All participants have been provided with a copy of the event purpose statement, event goals, event objectives, session descriptions, session goals, session objectives, and disclosure statements prior to the start of this event.



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To learn more about MPHI please contact us

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Proud to participate in the Kevin's Song Annual Conference

RESOURCE GALLERY

*All conference attendees are encouraged to visit the many
Resource Exhibitors located adjacent to the Grande Ballroom in the Garden Gallery.*

- AFSP – Michigan Chapter
- All Things Possible Wellness Center
- American Indian Health and Family Services of Southeastern MI
- ARISE Counseling Center and Training Institute
- Barb Smith Suicide Resource and Response Network
- Behavioral Health Connection MI
- Be Smart Western Wayne County (Saturday Only)
- Bethany Ann Galdes Foundation
- Black Family Development
- CNS Healthcare
- Corewell Health
- DBT Institute of MI
- Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network
- Eisenberg Family Depression Center – University of Michigan
- EVERYBODY VS. STIGMA
- Gryphon Place
- Hegira Health
- Henry Ford Behavioral Health Hospital
- Hope Network
- Institute for Hope and Human Flourishing
- Macomb County Community Mental Health
- Man Therapy
- Mental Health Foundation of West Michigan/be nice
- Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency
- Mindful ISTDP
- NAMI Metro
- Oakland County Health Network
- Rose Hill Center
- Six Feet OVER
- StoneCrest Center
- Terrance Trecardin (Saturday Only)
- TRAILS
- Trinity Health
- Wentworth & Associates, PC
- Words of Hope 4 Life

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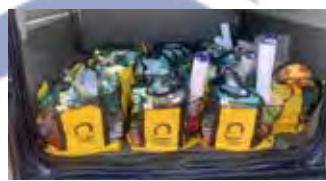
Self
Esteem
S • H • O • P



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home,
trainings and more
(we accept POs)!



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MEMORIAL FOREST

The Memorial Forest is made possible through the many generous donations to Kevin's Song in memory of Adam Elbadawi.

Sponsored by:



Kathleen McGovern
STUDIO OF INTERIOR DESIGN
INSPIRED DESIGN

THE MEMORIAL FOREST was created for the Kevin's Song Fourth Annual Conference on Suicide to help us remember and honor some of the people who have died by suicide and to offer solace to those who were left behind. This Memorial Forest, located in the **ABBEY ROOM on the Main Level** of the Conference Center, is made possible through the many generous donations to Kevin's Song in memory of Adam Elbadawi.

Please stop in and reflect, remember, meditate, pray and honor your loved ones.

- Most of all, we hope to plant seeds of compassion in the hearts of those who read the names: seeds that may develop into a commitment to understanding suicide, finding solutions and offering hope and healing.
- We all have within us a center of stillness surrounded by silence.
- This Memorial Forest, dedicated to survivors of those whose lives were prematurely ended, is a room in the middle of a busy conference center, dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense.
- We wanted to create in this small room, a quiet place where you may gather to remember, in thought and prayer, a loved one, a spouse, a child, a parent, a colleague or a friend who has died by suicide.
- There are simple things which speak to us all. We have sought for such things and we believe that we have found them in this forest of simple birch trees covered in shimmering points of light surrounding and embracing those who pass among their branches.
- So, in the middle of the room we see a symbol of how, daily, light gives life to the earth, a symbol to many of us of how the light of the spirit renews and restores.
- The trees in the room remind us of the many individual families and communities that have been affected by suicide. ***Visitors to the Memorial Forest are invited to hang a bird from the trees - in memory of a loved one lost to suicide or to honor a survivor.*** In this way, we remember that we are all connected in loss and fortified with hope.
- There is an ancient saying that the sense of a vessel is not in its shell but in the void. So it is with this Memorial Forest. It is for those who come here to fill the void and to unsettle their stillness with hope and resilience. (inspired by the words of Dag Hammarskjöld on the 1957 opening of the United Nations Meditation Room)

***The Abbey Room is located on the Main Level of the Conference Center, past the Chapel.
The Memorial Forest will be open throughout the 3-day Kevin's Song Conference on Suicide.***



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Guest House utilizes a holistic approach, dealing with the spiritual, physical, psychological, and emotional aspects of the respective addictions.

www.guesthouse.org



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Mental Health Professionals

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SAVING A LIFE AWARD

Recipients exemplify outstanding service to the community in Suicide Prevention. Past recipients have been individuals and organizations who have made a significant difference in the lives of citizens in crisis.



2025 HONOREES:

INDIVIDUAL HONOREE



Nancy Buyle, MA, LPC, ACTP

Macomb Intermediate School District

Nancy Buyle has her Master's Degree from Oakland University in Counseling and Post Master's Education in Mental Health. She has been working for the Macomb Intermediate School District since August of 2000 as their School Safety/Student Assistance Consultant. She is also a Licensed Clinical Therapist specializing in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. Nancy works with

many Macomb County agencies and is a member of several committees to improve collaboration and coordination of services with and among schools in the areas of juvenile justice, mental health, crisis intervention/response and student assistance.

As the Student Assistance Consultant, she leads the county's Student Assistance Program Network (SAP). The SAP Network is a cohort of school counselors, social workers and community agency personnel who meet bi-monthly to identify and address issues which prevent students from learning and being successful in school.

In March of 2001, Nancy was a key member of an interagency workgroup tasked with developing a comprehensive suicide prevention program. This workgroup consulted with founders of the National Yellow Ribbon Program and tailored an initiative in Macomb that reached over 10,000 youth in 13 public and private school districts. The year of this county-wide launch for suicide prevention, Macomb County recognized ZERO youth suicides, a highlight unheard-of in previous years of data. Nancy continues to work with community agencies and schools to bring comprehensive youth suicide prevention education and resources to schools and students in Macomb County. Nancy is the Chair of the Macomb County Suicide Prevention Coalition and was appointed by Governor Whitmer to the Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission where she served as co-chairperson.

Nancy also works closely with local school districts in planning for and responding to crises. She has been instrumental in developing a comprehensive crisis management protocol that has been distributed and shared with schools across the nation.

She is an accomplished trainer for many evidenced-based suicide prevention and trauma-related trainer programs. She also has her own clinical practice where she has helped many individuals find the resources to live after a suicidal crisis. She is passionate and has dedicated the last 40 years to helping individuals to realize their value and find purpose to live, hope and thrive.

ORGANIZATIONAL HONOREE



Henry Ford Partial Hospitalization Program

Henry Ford Behavioral Health Partial Hospitalization Program in

Metro Detroit, MI has been saving lives for decades. Partial Hospital Programs (PHPs) provide an alternative to inpatient psychiatric hospitalization where individuals can engage in daily programming that focuses on healing, finding hope, and

providing structure to their days. PHPs truly are a unique level of care and can prevent psychiatric hospitalizations, be used as a step-down after inpatient care, or be used when traditional outpatient treatment is not intensive enough to stabilize symptoms.

The average participant presents with active suicidality and severe mood and anxiety disorders. They are referred by their medical provider, an emergency department, or from an inpatient psychiatric unit. The therapeutic relationship begins at the first phone call from the PHP therapists who do their best to engage the person and begin instilling hope. It is crucial to help the person commit to this comprehensive program and validate the courage it takes to seek help. The skill of the PHP staff helps the person feel that they are not alone and that they have options. Once they begin the program, they are offered evidenced-based coping skills treatment using Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Henry Ford Health's Zero Suicide Protocols, and if necessary psychotropic medication. The dedicated staff do their best to engage each and every patient, usually beginning treatment with a conversation about what a "life worth living" could look like. Patients have their own individualized treatment plan and identify their own goals.

The caring PHP team are all long-term behavioral health professionals with a calling to help those in crisis with mental health conditions. This mighty team consists of Christine Hilton, full time supervisor/psychotherapist, Jessica Jensen, full time psychotherapist, Janice Greig, part time occupational therapist, Patricia Davison, contingent registered nurse, and Dr. Nina Fabian, attending psychiatrist. Additional coverage is provided by Denise Bilbrey, contingent R.N, Sarah Nawrot, social work intern, Kelly Darke, art therapist, Shari Mansky, contingent psychotherapist, Dr. Sam Schwendiman, Dr. Dan Smith, and many psychiatry residents completing their training. To support the expansion of the PHP program, additional talented team members include Jean El-Fakhoury, full time psychotherapist, and Vita Krzesak, part time occupational therapist. Recruitment for additional staff is in process.



Man Therapy Michigan

You can't fix your mental health with duct tape.

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What is Man Therapy Michigan?

Man Therapy Michigan reshapes the conversation about suicide prevention and broader men's mental health using stories of hope, resilience and recovery, coupled with humor, to cut through stigma and tackle issues like depression, divorce and even suicidal thoughts head on.

Man Therapy Michigan provides men approaching crisis, and the people who care about them, a place to go and learn more about men's mental health, examine their own and consider a wide array of actions that can put them on the path to treatment and recovery, all within an easy-to-access online portal at www.mantherapy.org.

Man Therapy Making a Difference in Michigan

In Michigan, since 2021, there have been over...

105,700

People to Visit
Mantherapy.org

41,350

18-Point Head Inspections
Completed

710

Man Therapy Michigan
Community Partners

Get Involved

Email: ManTherapyMI@gmail.com

Visit: Check out www.mantherapy.org and recommend it to men who could benefit

Follow: @ManTherapyMI on Facebook & X

Visit the Man Therapy Table in the Resource Gallery

Stop by our table to learn more about Man Therapy Michigan and get swag like t-shirts, koozies, posters, bathroom ads, and more.

Scan to visit mantherapy.org



Project part of state-wide initiative, *Preventing Suicide in Michigan Men* (PRiSMM), funded through a five-year grant awarded by the U.S. CDC to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

DAY
1

The first day of this bold and comprehensive conference will focus on integrating schools, youth-serving organizations, and clinicians to promote Suicide Prevention and mental well-being. Presentations will appeal to educators, mental health professionals and suicide prevention advocates who work with young people to build awareness and to share prevention strategies that are tailored to this diverse population.



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

8:00 - 8:05 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Jennifer Fair Margraf, MBA, CFRE
Executive Director

8:05 - 8:15 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



James White
President and CEO, Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

8:15 - 9:15 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Building Resilience—Changing our Culture One Person at a Time
Charisse Nixon, PhD

Director of PA Aggression Reduction Center, The Behrend College, Pennsylvania State University

This keynote will highlight relevant research and science related to optimizing youth’s developmental outcomes and building resilience. Adolescent development will be addressed as an important context for prevention efforts. Practical strategies and protective factors will be highlighted throughout.

Charisse Nixon serves as a Full Professor of Psychology at Penn State Behrend. She also serves as the Associate Director for the Susan Hirt Hagen Center for Community Outreach, Research, and Evaluation—a Center dedicated to promoting and sustaining positive communities for youth. She trains educators in the areas of resilience, adolescence, and bullying prevention throughout the US. Her programs offer a unique integration of empirical research and practical strategies to help teachers, counselors, mental health professionals, and caring adults create environments that optimize developmental outcomes for children and adolescents.

9:15 - 9:30 am

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

All Day
Each Day
The Abbey
(Main Level)



MEMORIAL FOREST

The Memorial Forest was created to help us remember and honor some of the people who have died by suicide and to offer solace to those who were left behind.

Sponsored by Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network and Kathey McGovern Studio of Interior Design

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL SUMMIT

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

9:30 - 10:30 am
Atrium Study
(Lower Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A1



Wellness Nuggets
Trish Marie Brown, LPC
Therapist, Ellie Mental Health

Suicide prevention begins by prioritizing and addressing our mental health needs. It's essential to equip yourself with the right tools! In this session, you will be introduced to several simple, purposeful, and effective calming techniques and coping mechanisms. You will be guided through how to implement each one and delve into the reasoning behind their effectiveness. You can then share these manageable wellness strategies with your clients, students, loved ones, or even use them for yourself.

Trish Marie Brown is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Michigan with 17 years of professional experience. Trish's resume includes work as both Mental Health Therapist and High School Counselor and she is currently a full-time remote Therapist at Ellie Mental Health Clarkston. Trish serves individuals, couples, and groups, ages 7-75; supporting those facing depression, anxiety, ADHD, life change/transition, bereavement, identity exploration, self-worth or stressors related to work, school, family, and relationships.

9:30 - 10:30 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A2



Teen Girls are Facing Record Levels of Sadness, Here's Why
Kristyn Gregory, DO
Medical Director of Behavioral Health, BCBSM

Young people today are facing significant challenges, with teenage girls being especially vulnerable. According to a recent report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 60% of teen girls reported feeling consistently sad in 2021, which is twice the rate observed in teen boys. It is crucial to identify key protective factors that can enhance adolescents' resilience. Additionally, an understanding of how brain development influences adolescents' engagement in risky behaviors is important. Lastly, effective mentoring should be explored as a potential strategy to improve outcomes for youth.

Dr. Kristyn Gregory is board-certified in Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychiatry. She has years of both clinical and leadership experience. A lifelong Michigander, she has dedicated her career to improving mental health outcomes for the people of Michigan. Currently, she is a medical director for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, where she uses her experience to shape policy and increase access to quality, evidence-based mental health care.

9:30 - 10:30 am
Atrium Parlor
(Lower Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A3

Build a Positive Culture and Connections in School to Strengthen Youth Suicide Protective Factors

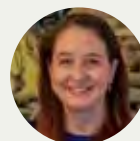
Two key protective factors in primary schools that help reduce the risk of suicide include staff building meaningful relationships with students and students developing a sense of belonging within their school. Discover how counselors spend the first three days of the school year nurturing these aspects. Learn practical tools that you can use in your own school to achieve this. List and explain the two major protective school factors as they relate to suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STB). Describe why the initial days of school are critical for establishing a foundation that promotes positive culture and healthy relationships. Identify the essential tools needed to implement these activities and more in your school.



Catherine Livingston, MA, LPC
District Wellness Consultant, Utica Schools

Catherine Livingston has over 40 years working with children and families. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Child

Development and a Master's Degree in Counseling. She is a Certified Teacher, Certified School Counselor, Licensed Professional Counselor and Trauma Informed Trainer. She is the current District Wellness Consultant and District Chair for Secondary School Counselors for Utica Community Schools, the second largest district in the state of Michigan. In 2022 she was named Michigan School Counselor of the Year.



Kimberly Twarowski
Counselor, Utica Schools

Kim Twarowski has been a counselor at Shelby Junior High for 26 years. During that time, she has served as School

Improvement Chair, Counseling Department Chair, and co-System Wide Counseling Department Chair. She is a certified Trauma Trainer with STARR Commonwealth and has facilitated several trainings in trauma and building relationships through the Michigan Education Association, Aspiring Educators of Michigan, and the Macomb Intermediate School District.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL SUMMIT

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

9:30 - 10:30 am
Drawing Rooms 1 & 2
(Lower Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A4



Breaking the Silence: A Journey of Resilience and Mental Health Advocacy

Erik Kramer

Former NFL Quarterback; Founder, Mental Health Touchdown; and Founder, EK Passing Camp

Join us as Erik Kramer presents The Ultimate Comeback, sharing his journey from NFL quarterback to mental health advocate. Erik will discuss his struggles with depression, his path to recovery, and his mission to support others on their mental health journeys and to destigmatize conversations around mental illness. Through initiatives like the EK Passing Camp for young athletes and Mental Health Touch Down, Erik combines his love for football with a commitment to breaking down barriers to mental health awareness. This inspiring presentation offers powerful insights into resilience, healing, and the importance of openly addressing mental health challenges.

Erik Kramer was the 1986 ACC Player of the Year for NC State and an NFL quarterback for 11 seasons. In November 2023, he published his memoir, The Ultimate Comeback, chronicling his journey in the NFL, his battles with long-term depression, and his inspiring recovery following a 2015 suicide attempt. He founded Mental Health Touch Down to support mental health awareness and the EK Passing Camp to mentor young football players, combining his love for the game with his commitment to helping others.

10:30 - 11:00 am

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

11:00 - 12:00 noon
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



EVERYBODY-VS-STIGMA: Pain into POWER

Kevin Fischer

Executive Director, NAMI Michigan and CEO, EVERYBODY -VS- STIGMA

Experiencing the suicide of a loved one, especially a child, is incredibly painful. Many survivors seek to find meaning in their grief. My keynote will discuss my journey from pain and suicidal thoughts to transforming that pain into the strength to advocate for others and restore purpose to my life. It will delve into the profound impact of suicide loss and how it challenges your self-worth, faith, and desire to live.

Kevin Fischer is the Executive Director of NAMI Michigan. In addition, he is the Founder of the Dominique Fischer Memorial Foundation, CEO of EVERYBODY -VS- STIGMA, Immediate Past-President of Crisis Intervention Team International, a member of Governor Whitmer's Suicide Prevention Commission, a member of the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services Mental Health Diversion Council and Behavioral Health Advisory Council, and Co-Executive Producer of the Mind Matters with Dr. Michele Show.

12:00 - 1:00 pm
Atrium
(Lower Level)

LUNCH - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

All Day
Each Day
The Abbey
(Main Level)



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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL SUMMIT

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

1:00 - 2:00 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Supporting the Mental Wellbeing of LGBTQIA2S+ Youth: Strategies and Resources for Creating Safe and Affirming Schools and Communities

Brett Harris, PhD

Senior Research Scientist, Public Health Department at NORC - University of Chicago

Youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) experience higher rates of suicide compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. Influencing factors include elevated levels of anxiety, depression, substance use, discrimination, stigma, bullying, violence, loneliness, and reduced acceptance and social support. This presentation will emphasize the significance of positive messaging and fostering safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQIA2S+ youth. School professionals will receive specific guidance based on insights from interviews conducted with experts, advocates, and key informants, as well as focus groups involving LGBTQIA2S+ young adults and their parents. The presentation will detail findings from these interviews and focus groups and will include a specialized guide for school professionals. Additionally, the presentation will introduce the STARS school-based training program, designed to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth even in areas with anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

Dr. Brett Harris is a Senior Research Scientist at NORC at the University of Chicago where she leads a suicide prevention portfolio funded by SAMHSA, CDC, and private foundations and organizations. In addition, Dr. Harris oversees the development and implementation of school suicide prevention programs including the STARS training program. Dr. Harris is President of the New York State Public Health Association and a Clinical Associate Professor for the University at Albany School of Public Health, where she developed and taught a course on suicide prevention.

2:00 - 2:15 pm

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

2:15 - 3:15 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B1

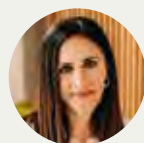
Building Confident and Resilient Kids with Bright Futures

This breakout session will cover effective, age-appropriate parenting strategies designed to help children navigate daily challenges and enhance their self-confidence. Participants will explore different parenting styles and their advantages, understand social-emotional developmental milestones, and appreciate the roles of parents and community members in supporting children's aspirations and self-esteem. The session will identify various types and benefits of parenting styles, recognize key social-emotional developmental stages, and highlight the importance of parents and community partners in helping kids reach their goals and build self-confidence.



Sarah Emmerson, MA, LLP

Sarah Emmerson has worked in multiple settings with children and families for 20 years. Her work with at-risk youth led her to understand the role of trauma and toxic stress on kids and how to reduce the negative impact, support families, and help young people build resiliency. In her current private practice, she works with adults, children, and families to build foundational skills to improve mental health and strengthen relationships with others and themselves.



Nicole Runyon, LMSW

Psychotherapist, Parent Coach and Mental Health Advocate

Nicole Runyon, is an esteemed psychotherapist, parent coach, and keynote speaker renowned for her expertise in child and adolescent mental health, backed by an extensive 21-year career in the field.

All Day
Each Day
The Abbey
(Main Level)



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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL SUMMIT

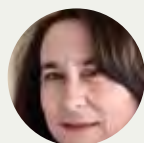
AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

2:15 - 3:15 pm
Drawing Rooms 1 & 2
(Lower Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B2

Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Programs: A Panel Discussion

Peer-to-peer mental health programs help schools raise awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage students to seek support. This panel will discuss the experiences of professionals who are implementing these programs in their schools.

**Moderator:****Nancy Buyle, MA, LPC, ACTP**

School Safety/Student Assistance Consultant, Macomb Intermediate School District and Co-Chair, Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission

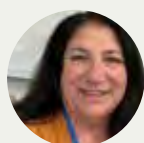
Nancy Buyle has worked at the MISD for 25 years providing leadership, service and support to educators in Michigan. She also leads Macomb County's Suicide Prevention Coalition and is a Living Works safeTALK and ASIST trainer. Nancy facilitates the county's Student Assistance Program Network, a cohort of professionals who identify and address issues which prevent students from learning and being successful in school. Nancy earned her BA in Psychology and MA in Counseling with a specialization in Mental Health from Oakland University. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor.

**Christine Kuhl, LLP**

School Psychologist, Grosse Pointe North High School

Christine Kuhl is a School and Clinical Psychologist. She earned her

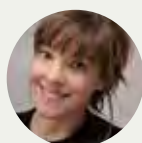
B.A. in Psychology from Michigan State University and an M.A. +30 in School and Community Psychology from Wayne State University. Christine has worked in the public-school setting for 23 years with kindergarten through post-high school students. She currently serves Grosse Pointe North High School where she has implemented a mental health peer-to-peer program based on the University of Michigan Depression Center's model for 5 years.

**Lyn Adolfo**

SEL Specialist, Redford Union High School

Lyn K. Adolfo is a passionate educator and current Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Specialist at Redford Union

High School in Michigan. Lyn has dedicated her career to improving the lives of students and supporting their emotional well-being. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Elementary Education from Wayne State University, and a Master's in Educational Leadership from Eastern Michigan University. Lyn's deep commitment to student success led her to her current role, where she focuses on integrating SEL practices to foster positive school environments and emotional resilience.

**Christina Harvey, MPH**

Health Curriculum Consultant, Oakland County Schools

Christina Harvey works with Oakland County Schools on the implementation

of evidence-based health education curricula and supportive interventions to enhance student health. She earned her Master's in Health Behavior and Health Education from the University of Michigan and Bachelor's in Psychology and Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Science from Michigan State University. Christina has held multiple positions in various organizations related to public health, including the Michigan School Health Coordinator's Association, the Oakland County Health Division, the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Center for Managing Chronic Disease, and SAMHSA.

2:15 - 3:15 pm
Atrium Study
(Lower Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B3

Suffering in Silence**Domonique Anderson, MA, TLLP**

This presentation outlines signs of potential suicidal thoughts and offers prevention strategies. It also highlights support resources for families and the community. Learn techniques to reduce suicidal ideation in classrooms, therapy settings, and at home, and recognize signs of suicidal contemplation.

Domonique Anderson is a healing advocate, mother, wife and lover of life. Being authentic is her motto and unveiling the gifts of others. She allows you to be you in the therapy room and outside. She believes in awakening the soul to walk in your truth. Her faith carries her through and is the passion for her work. She is an Early Career Professional and cannot wait to see where her journey takes her.

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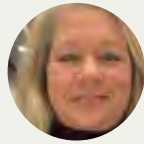
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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL SUMMIT

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

2:15 - 3:15 pm
Atrium Parlor
(Lower Level)

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOL SUMMIT - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B4



Supporting Youth After a Trauma

Danielle Sackrider, LMSW (Clinical & Macro)

Suicide Prevention Coordinator and Trainer, Integrated Services of Kalamazoo

This session will focus on understanding the impact of trauma on youth, specific to post-vention support after a suicide loss. It will also focus on strategies adults can use to support youth through a variety of emotions, grief and finding a path to a new normal.

Danielle Sackrider earned her MSW from the University of Michigan and has over 20 years of experience working with youth, families, and community partner organizations. Danielle is TF-CBT certified and has developed and supervised several successful programs. Danielle is a trainer for safeTALK, AMSR, and Mental Health First Aid, and trains on trauma and stress management. Danielle is co-lead and developer of the Kalamazoo LOSS Team, providing support to those who have lost someone to suicide. Danielle is currently providing support and training using the Zero Suicide Model.

3:15 - 3:30 pm

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

3:30 - 4:30 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Free To Fly: The Secret to Fostering Independence in the Next Generation

Nicole Runyon, LMSW

Psychotherapist, Parent Coach and Mental Health Advocate

A staggering 42% of Generation Z has been diagnosed with a mental health condition. In this talk, we will explore the distinct impact that digital technology has had on child development and its role in the rising rates of mental illness among today's youth. While technology is a permanent fixture in our lives, so are you. This presentation aims to provide strategies for professionals working with children to support their journey towards independence.

Nicole Runyon is an esteemed psychotherapist, parent coach, and keynote speaker renowned for her expertise in child and adolescent mental health, backed by an extensive 21-year career in the field.

COMPLIMENTARY RECEPTION

4:30 - 6:00 pm
Garden Gallery
(Main Level)

Kevin's Song is hosting a Resource Gallery Reception, compliments of Marx Layne & Company, in the Garden Gallery at the conclusion of the final Keynote Presentation from 4:30pm to 6:00pm.

Sponsored by



All conference attendees and presenters are invited to attend to network and interact with each other and the many organizations represented in the Resource Gallery.

Includes complimentary appetizers and two drinks. A cash bar is also available.

All Day
Each Day
The Abbey
(Main Level)



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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL SUMMIT

2025 SAVING A LIFE AWARD DINNER

This dinner is by separate ticket only. The cost is \$30 and can be purchased at the Bookstore in the Resource Center (Garden Gallery) or by contacting Leo Nouhan at Leo@KevinsSong.org

6:00 - 8:30 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

INTRODUCTION BY:



Jennifer Fair Margraf, MBA, CFRE
Executive Director

Recipients exemplify outstanding service to the community in Suicide Prevention. Past recipients have been individuals and organizations who have made a significant difference in the lives of citizens in crisis.



2025 INDIVIDUAL HONOREE:



Nancy Buyle, MA, LPC, ACTP

School Safety/Student Assistance Consultant, Macomb Intermediate School District and Co-Chair, Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission

Congratulations to Nancy Buyle for her steadfast commitment to saving lives and for her outstanding service to the community.

2025 ORGANIZATIONAL HONOREE:



Henry Ford Partial Hospitalization Program

Henry Ford Health, Detroit

Congratulations to the Henry Ford Partial Hospitalization Program for demonstrating how organizations, big or small, can mobilize communities and make a difference in preventing suicide and saving lives.

CONCERT OF HOPE AND HEALING

Sponsored by



Following Dinner and the Saving A Life Award presentations, we will be entertained by the freshman class of the **University of Michigan Musical Theatre Department** under the direction of **Cynthia Kortman Westphal**.



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DAY
2

The second day of the Conference will include an array of powerful presentations that engage clinicians and suicide prevention advocates to enhance their knowledge and skills to engage people to live their best lives and prevent suicide. Attendees will hear the latest in research about suicide and risk assessment as well as evidenced-based treatments and prevention strategies to better serve individuals and communities at risk.



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

8:00 - 8:15 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Jennifer Fair Margraf, MBA, CFRE
Executive Director

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

8:15 - 9:15 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Lives Worth Living: A New Approach to Suicide Prevention
Bart Andrews, PhD

Chief Clinical Officer, Behavioral Health Response

Our suicide prevention efforts largely follow a medical model: assessment, risk level determination, and intervention. However, this approach faces challenges. More low/no-risk individuals die by suicide than high-risk ones, and our risk assessments lack robust evidence. Inpatient admission is often used without sufficient evidence. Additionally, many who die by suicide don't seek healthcare or deny suicidal thoughts in their last visit. Thus, the healthcare system plays a crucial role but needs improvement. This presentation suggests that suicide is more cultural than mental health-related, requiring improved responses to emotional distress and broader prevention efforts focusing on creating fulfilling lives.

Bart Andrews is the Chief Clinical Officer at Behavioral Health Response. Dr. Andrews is the chair of the American Association of Suicidology's Advisory Council, facilitator of Missouri's Suicide Prevention in Healthcare ECHO, a member of the Missouri Suicide Prevention Network, a recipient of the 2022 American Association of Suicidology Roger Tierney Service Award, and a ZeroSuicide Academy Faculty member. Dr. Andrews is a suicide attempt survivor and a proponent of embracing lived expertise in our suicide prevention efforts.

9:15 - 9:30 am

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CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

9:30 - 10:30 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A1

Creating a Community of Practice to Prevent Suicide

While many suicide prevention programs target individuals showing signs of struggle, much can be done beforehand to support mental wellbeing and proactively reduce risk (universal and selective prevention). Promoting Community Conversations About Research to End Suicide (PC CARES) differs by balancing scientific and community knowledge and training community health workers in a six-month series of five 3-hour Learning Circles. Each session includes discussions on research findings, community perspectives, and practical applications. The breakout session will explain this process and encourage participants to engage in developing evidence-informed prevention strategies.



Lisa Wexler, MSW, PhD

Professor, University of Michigan

Lisa Wexler is a Professor of Social Work and a Research Professor in the Center for Research on Group Dynamics in the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan. Her federally funded, participatory research program uses a variety of methods to partner with community members to learn, reflect and mobilize to reduce suicide risk and promote youth wellness. Her practical approach combines evidence-based insights and tools for everyday use with dialogue and real-time tailoring, which creates hopeful opportunities for prevention.



Elizabeth Evans, DHA, MSW

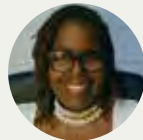
Research Investigator, University of Michigan Institute for Social Research

Dr. Elizabeth Evans is a Research Investigator at the Institute for Social Research, focusing on community-driven suicide prevention and behavioral health initiatives for Indigenous communities. She is co-leading the adaptation of Promoting Community Conversations About Research to End Suicide (PC CARES) for Michigan tribal communities, integrating community values into tailored prevention interventions. A member of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Dr. Evans is committed to advancing Indigenous research leadership and equitable health practices.

9:30 - 10:30 am
Drawing Rooms 1 & 2
(Lower Level)

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A2

L.E.T.S. Save Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for Black and African American Communities



Jennifer Johnson

DEI Chair/Board Member, AFSP Michigan

This session will offer a comprehensive overview of the prevalence of suicide within the Black community, considering the effects of racial and systemic influences. The session will highlight the risk and protective factors, identify the warning signs, and provide guidance on how to seek assistance for individuals in distress.

Jennifer Johnson, who has a personal and professional connection to the issues of suicide prevention and diversity, is serving her second term on the Board of Directors for the AFSP Michigan Chapter. Her unique perspective, education, and commitment are evident in her role as the chair of the D.E.I. (Accessibility and Belonging) Team. Jennifer provides education grounded in research and based on the critical concepts of Listening, Empathy, Trust, and Support (L.E.T.S.) related to suicide prevention in the Black and African American community.

9:30 - 10:30 am
Atrium Parlor
(Lower Level)

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A3

Work Worth Doing, Lives Worth Living: Shaping Sustainable Careers in Public Safety



Gregory Flynn

Chief, West Bloomfield Fire Department

This session explores actionable strategies for creating supportive, resilient work environments that enhance mental wellness and sustainability for first responders. Participants will learn to address public safety professionals' unique challenges, focusing on trauma-informed care, wellness programs, and compassionate leadership. They will reflect on their attitudes toward mental health, learn practical steps to implement supportive policies and apply the Yellow Rose Pledge principles to reduce stigma and foster advocacy within their organizations.

Chief Gregory Flynn joined the fire service in 1998. He has served West Bloomfield as a firefighter/paramedic, EMS Division Captain, Assistant Chief, and Fire Chief. Flynn has a Bachelor's Degree in Public Safety Studies, is a graduate of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program and is a graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School - Center for Homeland Defense & Security Master's Program.

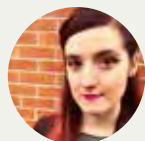
CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

9:30 - 10:30 am

**Atrium Study
(Lower Level)****CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION A4****Reframing Recovery: Finding Hope and Growth in the Process**

This session explores post-traumatic growth and dialectical behavior therapy to build a fulfilling life and self-love after a suicide attempt. It emphasizes celebrating milestones while also finding compassion during relapses or difficulties. The workshop encourages rethinking self-care in recovery, honoring experiences and strengths despite highs and lows.

**Kiersten Gutherman, LMSW**

*Suicide Prevention Program Lead,
CNS Healthcare*

Kiersten Gutherman is the Suicide Prevention Program Lead at CNS

Healthcare. Kiersten's passion lies in mental health, disability justice, and suicide prevention, particularly within the LGBTQ+ community and among survivors of sexual assault. Her dedication and work earned her the title of NAMI Michigan's 2023 Advocate of the Year. Kiersten shares her lived experience as a suicide attempt survivor and her experiences with chronic suicidality to confront stigma and advocate for change, while proving that recovery is possible.

**Sara Kadish Beckett, LLMSW**

Suicide Prevention Clinician, CNS Healthcare

Sara Kadish Beckett is a dedicated suicide prevention clinician at CNS Healthcare, bringing a unique perspective

to her work as a suicide attempt survivor and a proud member of both the queer and Jewish communities. Sara is committed to leveraging her personal and professional experiences to provide compassionate support to those in crisis. Through her role, she strives to promote mental health awareness and advocate for comprehensive suicide prevention strategies, drawing from her own journey to instill hope and resilience in others facing similar challenges.

10:30 - 10:45 am

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

10:45 - 11:45 am

**Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)****Building Lives Worth Living by Increasing Access to Dialectical Behavior Therapy****Shireen Rizvi, PhD, ABPP**

Professor and Chair of the Department of Clinical Psychology in the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is a psychosocial treatment proven to reduce suicidal behavior and other behaviors linked to emotion dysregulation. The primary goal of DBT is to help individuals develop "lives worth living." Despite its effectiveness, DBT remains costly, time-consuming, and inaccessible to many individuals who could benefit from it. This presentation will outline a research initiative aimed at increasing the accessibility of DBT and will conclude by suggesting areas for future research to overcome barriers to its dissemination and implementation.

Shireen L. Rizvi is Professor of Clinical Psychology at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers University. Her research interests include improving outcomes, training, and dissemination of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) for the treatment of complex and severe populations. Her work has resulted in dozens of peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, as well as a sole-authored book. Dr. Rizvi is board certified in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology and in DBT and she has trained hundreds of students and practitioners from around the world in DBT.

11:45 am - 12:45 pm

**Atrium
(Lower Level)**

LUNCH - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

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CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

12:45 - 1:45 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Changing the Culture of Suicide Prevention to Support Our Diverse Communities

Joyce Chu, PhD

Director, Community Connections Psychological Associates and Professor of Psychology, Palo Alto University

Suicide prevention programs have largely applied similar approaches across diverse communities, despite suicide presenting differently in ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other culturally diverse groups. There is a need for cultural change and advocacy to incorporate culture and diversity into these efforts systematically. This keynote will address these gaps by explaining how suicide varies among cultural groups and discussing advances in culturally responsive suicide prevention methods. Attendees will learn about current research and practical strategies to help leaders, clinicians, and stakeholders consider culture and diversity in their programs. Practical examples will be provided to inspire transformation in attendees' own practices and prevention efforts.

Joyce Chu is a licensed Clinical Psychologist whose expertise lies in the areas of suicidology, diversity and culture, and community mental health. She works in collaboration with community, behavioral health, and public health colleagues to infuse culture, diversity and equity into suicide prevention efforts for ethnic minority, LGBTQ+, and other culturally diverse communities. She has published numerous works including a cultural theory and model of suicide and a tool that assists in accounting for cultural influences on suicide risk.

1:45 - 2:00 pm

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

2:00 - 3:00 pm
Drawing Rooms 1 & 2
(Lower Level)

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B1



Gratitude and Attitude. Thanks for All That You Do, and I Have a Favor...

Dennis Gillan

Mental Health Advocate, Speaker, and Author

Gratitude and attitude matter. Thank you for everything you do. Here's the request: Engage in the conversation about suicide. Dennis will share his experiences of losing people to suicide and express appreciation for the counselors who have supported him. He'll then encourage the audience to discuss this often-uncomfortable topic. He will evaluate existing training programs and urge even experienced clinicians to keep asking, "Are you suicidal?"

Dennis Gillan is recognized as a national thought leader in suicide prevention and mental health advocacy. Profoundly affected by personal experiences of suicide, Dennis has channeled his grief into action by working on a suicide prevention hotline and sharing his story on the TEDx stage. He is an author and serves as the executive director of the Half a Sorrow Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving mental health through genuine dialogues. Dennis's presentations foster authentic conversations, leveraging his own losses alongside practical solutions and insights.

2:00 - 3:00 pm
Atrium Parlor
(Lower Level)

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B2



Suicide in the Construction Industry - Let's Talk: Better Yet Let's Listen

MaryAnn Duchene, RN, MSN

Director of Behavioral Health Services, Trinity Health

This presentation addresses the issue of suicide within the construction industry. It will offer a comprehensive overview of relevant information and practical resources for anyone looking for support. Learn about the demographics related to suicide in this sector, the contributing factors, the relationship between substance abuse and suicide, and the distinction between self-harm and suicide. Additionally, discover resources you can include in your toolkit.

MaryAnn Duchene has extensive experience working in Emergency Departments, Behavioral Health Units, and Medical Units. Her roles have varied from staff nurse to educator, teaching mental health clinicals and leadership. She has always been an advocate for safe, quality care for the most vulnerable patients.

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

2:00 - 3:00 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B3



Shared Struggles, Unique Paths: Understanding and Preventing Suicide Among Adolescents, White Males, Military Personnel, and Indigenous Communities to Inform Clinical Treatment of Suicide

Gigi Colombini, LMSW

Owner, Psychotherapist and Suicidologist, Institute of Health and Human Flourishing

This presentation studies suicide by examining identity, meaning, and purpose, and how these elements influence risk and resilience among adolescents, white males, military personnel, and Indigenous communities. It identifies common issues like isolation and stigma, as well as specific challenges such as trauma and cultural identity loss, to offer clinicians a deeper understanding of the role of purpose and connection in suicide prevention. Attendees will learn practical methods for adapting treatment approaches that focus on restoring meaning and fostering hope, assisting patients in reconnecting with their personal and cultural identities for improved outcomes.

Gigi Colombini is familiar to many in the suicide prevention community - having presented at many meetings and conferences and providing advice and guidance on how to work with patients who struggle with thoughts of suicide and how to help families cope with loss. She is the founder of the Institute for Hope and Human Flourishing. Her holistic, common-sense and insight-oriented therapeutic approach provides her patients a clear and simple path to understanding, better enabling them to create changes they are looking for in their lives.

2:00 - 3:00 pm
Atrium Study
(Lower Level)

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE - AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION B4



Demystifying Inpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment

Dustin Ames, MBA, BSN, RN *CEO, Beaumont Behavioral Health - Dearborn*

Inpatient mental health and substance use treatment involves comprehensive care provided in an inpatient setting. This includes information on how to access this level of care, an understanding of the treatment provided in such settings, and the diagnoses that are treated.

Dustin Ames is a distinguished healthcare professional with over 13 years of experience in the industry. His career has been marked by a profound dedication to mental health, where he has consistently worked to provide vital services to our communities. Dustin is committed to maintaining high standards of care and continuously improving services to meet the diverse needs of the community. Driven by a genuine passion for mental health, Dustin continues to positively influence individuals and communities.

3:00 - 3:15 pm

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

3:15 - 4:15 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

Let's Talk: Evidence-Based Suicide Risk Assessment

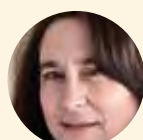
Engaging in a natural yet effective conversation with a client experiencing suicidal thoughts requires both art and skill. This session covers the value of evidence-based Suicide Risk Assessment Standards. Participants will explore a framework for suicide assessment supported by empirical data and integrated with the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide. The session will also emphasize incorporating this framework into natural conversations during therapy sessions to better assess a client's suicidality.



Thomas Joiner, PhD

The Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of Psychology, Florida State University

A Princeton graduate, **Thomas Joiner** received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Joiner's work is on suicidal behavior and related conditions. Author of over 800 peer-reviewed publications, he is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior* and has received multiple awards for his work in suicidology. Dr. Joiner has authored/edited nineteen books, has made numerous media appearances, and runs a part-time clinical/consulting practice specializing in suicidal behavior, including legal consultation on suits involving death by suicide.



Nancy Buyle, MA, LPC, ACTP

School Safety/Student Assistance Consultant, Macomb Intermediate School District and Co-Chair, Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission

Nancy Buyle has worked at the MISD for 25 years providing leadership, service and support to educators in Michigan. She also leads Macomb County's Suicide Prevention Coalition and is a Living Works safeTALK and ASIST trainer. Nancy facilitates the county's Student Assistance Program Network, a cohort of professionals who identify and address issues which prevent students from learning and being successful in school. Nancy earned her BA in Psychology and MA in Counseling with a specialization in Mental Health from Oakland University. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor.



The purpose of this seminar is to prepare leaders of faith communities to prevent, intervene and respond to suicide. Suicide is a highly stigmatized topic and experience. Knowing how to respond when thoughts of suicide may be present can be challenging. This seminar will deepen understanding and build confidence with practical training, insights, and resources to apply within the context of the faith community.

Moderator: Barb Smith

President, Barb Smith Suicide Resource & Response Network

The Barb Smith Suicide Resource & Response Network is recognized at the state and national level for its work in training individuals in suicide prevention, advocacy, and postvention. As a survivor of both her brother and sister-in-law's suicides, Barb took her lived experience from the past 33 years to help find purpose for her pain. Barb is the facilitator of the local Survivors of Suicide support group, coordinator for the Local Outreach for Suicide Survivors team, and a Victims Advocate for the Saginaw County Sheriff Department. Barb is a certified trainer for LivingWorks ASIST, safeTALK, and Suicide Awareness programs. Barb was appointed to the Governor's Suicide Prevention Commission and most recently she was honored with the Saving A Life Award from Kevin's Song and presented the Michigan Special Honoree award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Her advocacy led to her winning her the WAVE award for Saginaw County.

Daniel A. Roberts, DD, DMin, FT USN

Rabbi Roberts is Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Emanu El in Cleveland, Ohio, where he served for over thirty-five years. He is also a Fellow in Thanatology as certified by the Association of Death Education and Counseling and has done extensive work on bereavement and mourning. Rabbi Roberts has produced a video on teenage suicide entitled "Inside I Ache" that has had national distribution. Rabbi Roberts is a co-editor with Melinda Moore of *The Suicide Funeral (or Memorial Service): Honoring their Memory, Comforting their Survivors and After the Suicide Funeral and Wisdom on the Path to Posttraumatic Growth*. Presently, Rabbi Roberts serves a monthly congregation in Rapid City, South Dakota and lives at the Balfour Riverfront Park in Denver, CO.

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the role of faith leaders in undertaking activities aimed to keep congregations and communities safe from suicide.
2. Examine the impacts of culture, attitudes and theology as they relate to being able to provide appropriate support on issues of suicide prevention, intervention and postvention
3. Identify skills and strategies for faith leadership in the context of suicide prevention, intervention and postvention.

Glen Bloomstrom, MDiv, MS, M SS

Glen Bloomstrom serves as a consultant for LivingWorks Education. He is a 30-year US Army active duty chaplain and combat veteran. Since retiring he has served as an adjunct professor, training developer for the Department of Defense and trainer and presenter for numerous state health and agricultural initiatives. He is passionate strengthening suicide prevention competencies in diverse community settings for clergy, counselors, veterans, and peer helpers. Under his leadership, LivingWorks fielded an on-line suicide prevention training program for clergy and ministry leaders entitled LivingWorks Faith. He serves as an elder at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Melinda Moore, PhD

Dr. Melinda Moore is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky, and part of the core faculty for a Clinical Psychology doctoral program there. She routinely trains clinicians in the empirically-supported suicide-focused treatment framework, the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS), and is in private practice in Lexington, Kentucky. Dr. Moore works at the intersection of faith and suicide prevention. She conducts suicide bereavement research at Eastern Kentucky University with an emphasis on Posttraumatic Growth.

#2025KEVINSSONG

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A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS - FAITH LEADER TRAINING

MORNING SESSIONS:

8:15 - 9:05 am
Library Room B
(Upper Level)

General Session One:

- 1. Introduction:** The potential of Faith Community involvement. Framing the issue of confronting suicide within communities. Statistics.
- 2. The Challenge:** The impact of stigma and influence of culture. The need for ministry leadership.
- 3. Collaboration:** Why faith communities are vital for suicide safety and the need for collaboration.

9:15 - 10:05 am
Library Room B
(Upper Level)

General Session Two:

- 4. Theology and Attitudes about Suicide:** Faith Leader theological underpinnings for involvement in suicide prevention. Theological summaries regarding suicide from Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Buddhist traditions. Faith community and denominational statements as guides for understanding and action.
- 5. Where to Begin:** Introduction to a Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Model: Prevention / Intervention / Postvention

10:15 - 11:20 am
Library Room B
(Upper Level)

General Session Three:

- 6. Prevention:** Integrating suicide prevention naturally into the life of a faith community.
- 7. Intervention*:** Why intervention training is essential. Basics of suicide intervention: how to have a conversation with a person struggling with thoughts of suicide. Network of Safety intervention training.
- 8. Postvention*:** Considerations for suicide funerals and memorials. Suicide Grief.
- 9. Resources for further study and reference**
- 10. Q and A**

* More detailed training on Intervention and Postvention in the afternoon breakout sessions.

11:30 am - 12:30 pm
Library Room A
(Upper Level)

LUNCH - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT TRAINING OPTIONS:

12:45 - 4:30 pm
Library Room B
(Upper Level)

OPTION ONE: safeTALK Training

Glen Bloomstrom, MDiv, MS, M SS

Faith leaders will learn to recognize and engage persons who might be having thoughts of suicide and connect them with community resources trained in suicide intervention.

LivingWorks safeTALK is a four-hour training that equips people to be more alert to someone thinking of suicide and better able to connect them with further help. Using a simple yet effective model, LivingWorks safeTALK empowers everyone to make a difference. With over 120,000 people attending each year, it's the world's fastest-growing suicide prevention skills training course.

12:45 - 4:30 pm
Library Room C
(Upper Level)

OPTION TWO: Postvention Training

Melinda Moore, PhD and Rabbi Daniel A. Roberts, DD, DMin, FT USN

This training will focus on the care of those left behind following a suicide and provide faith leaders with the resources and guidance they need to foster hope and healing in their communities.

Suicide postvention refers to providing immediate and ongoing support to those impacted by a suicide loss. Postvention is critical to promote healing after suicide and reduces suicide risk for loss survivors. Through postvention practices, we can reduce the stigma surrounding suicide and support individuals and communities through the grieving process. The main goals of postvention are to help people grieve in a healthy ways, both individually and as a community - and to prevent further suicides among those who may be at risk due to the loss.

DAY 3

As part of the annual Kevin's Song Conference on Suicide, the Saturday program focuses on survivors of suicide. The stories of loss and attempt survivors will help to ease the pain for those who often suffer alone and in silence. The day will also address how to manage the grief and loss following a death by

suicide. The program will offer hope to those who have suffered a loss and to those who love and support them.

Attendees will have an opportunity to meet privately in group support sessions facilitated by mental health professionals.



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

8:30 - 8:45 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Jennifer Fair Margraf, MBA, CFRE
Executive Director

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

8:45 - 9:45 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Journey Towards Recovery... **Dennis Gillan**

Executive Director, Half a Sorrow Foundation

We will delve into the profound and complex grief associated with losing a loved one to suicide. Our discussion will cover coping mechanisms and strategies for supporting one another. Participants, many of whom will be survivors of such loss, will find common ground and connect with others in ways they may not have imagined. Additionally, participants will gain insights into the importance of self-care.

Dennis Gillan is recognized as a national thought leader in suicide prevention and mental health advocacy. Profoundly affected by personal experiences of suicide, Dennis has channeled his grief into action by working on a suicide prevention hotline and sharing his story on the TEDx stage. He is an author and serves as the executive director of the Half a Sorrow Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving mental health through genuine dialogues. Dennis's presentations foster authentic conversations, leveraging his own losses alongside practical solutions and insights.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

9:45 - 10:45 am
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)



Suicide Prevention, Postvention and Lived Experience: A Panel Discussion with Lived Experience Participants **Moderated By Susanna Rickman, QIDP, QMHP**

Suicide Prevention Manager, Gryphon Place and Support Group Facilitator, Kevin's Song

This live panel will discuss the impact of suicide on individuals and how to support those affected by a suicide loss or attempt. Panelists with diverse experiences in suicide prevention, postvention, and lived experience will address common questions and misconceptions.

Susanna Rickman is the Suicide Prevention Manager for Gryphon Place, where she oversees the agency's Suicide Prevention Projects. Susanna also facilitates the Survivors of Suicide Loss support group and manages the outside trainings her agency provides to the community. She has worked in the field of Mental Health for over 13 years as a Crisis Worker, Case Manager, Supports Coordinator, Crisis Program Manager and currently as the Suicide Prevention Manager. She is also a certified trainer for safeTALK and QPR.

10:45 - 11:00 am

BREAK - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

SURVIVING SUICIDE - A JOURNEY OF HEALING & HOPE

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

11:00 - 12:00 noon
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

**Finding Hope and Healing from Suicide Loss****Gwen Kapcia, LBSW, CT***Owner, Your Grief Guide*

Experiencing a death loss leaves a deep wound, one we are never fully prepared for. When you add the layer of a death by suicide it can leave the survivor with many unanswered questions and wondering if healing is possible. This presentation will look at how our culture and upbringing play a part in our grief journey, provide tools for survival and hope for healing.

Gwen Kapcia is a licensed social worker in the state of Michigan and holds a certification in Thanatology, the study of death, dying and bereavement. She has spent her entire career in grief and loss, spanning from hospice care, funeral home aftercare support, and is the former Executive Director of Starlight Ministries. She is the co-author of a recently published book: "Not Another Lasagna: How to Truly Help a Grieving Friend" and the Mourning Star curriculum for children, teens and adults.

12:00 - 12:30 pm
Atrium
(Lower Level)

LUNCH - Be Sure to Visit the **Resource Gallery, Bookstore, and the Memorial Forest**

12:45 - 2:00 pm
Library Room B
(Upper Level)

LOSS SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP**Facilitated By Gigi Colombini, LMSW***Owner, Psychotherapist and Suicidologist, Institute of Health and Human Flourishing*

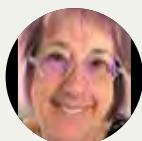
Gigi Colombini is familiar to many in the suicide prevention community - having presented at many meetings and conferences and providing advice and guidance on how to work with patients who struggle with thoughts of suicide and how to help families cope with loss. She is the founder of the Institute for Hope and Human Flourishing. Her holistic, common-sense and insight-oriented therapeutic approach provides her patients a clear and simple path to understanding, better enabling them to create changes they are looking for in their lives.

12:45 - 2:00 pm
Library Room A
(Upper Level)

ATTEMPT SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP**Facilitated By Scott Teichmer***Suicide Prevention Facilitator, Summit Pointe*

Scott Teichmer serves as the facilitator of Suicide Prevention Coalition of Calhoun County. He is a QPR Instructor and Master Trainer with over a decade of experience in behavioral healthcare, including Intensive Case Management, Mobile Crisis Response, and Psychological First Aid. Scott is a suicide attempt survivor, and, in 2018, started the Suicide Attempt Survivors Support Group, the first peer support group of its kind in Michigan. He is working on a video series focused on suicide prevention through the lens of lived experience.

12:45 - 2:00 pm
Library Room C
(Upper Level)

GRIEF IS A VERB WORKSHOP**Jane Reiter, BFA, MFA**

Grief is a Verb encourages each participant to honor the enduring connection to the loved one who has died. Bereavement signifies great love that lives with you after you lose someone close. In this hands-on workshop we will explore making memorial items to voice your grief. Learn to make beaded bracelets and simple fabric pins to wear proudly. Each person will complete at least one bracelet and one pin by the end of the session. Supplies and instruction provided.

Jane Reiter is a life-long artist. Having lost her husband to suicide in 2023, she realizes the power of art-making to overcome obstacles and rough periods in life. Love of color, pattern, texture and sense of humor infuses her artwork. As a retired librarian, Jane enjoys incorporating bits and pieces from books and magazines as well as fabrics into mixed-media collages. She also enjoys teaching others to use art for their own benefit. Making art and looking at art are lifelong passions.

2:00 - 2:15 pm

BREAK - Move to Main Level



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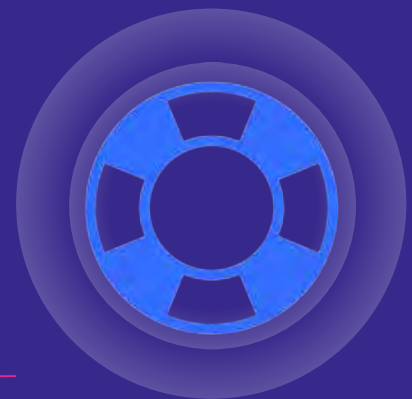
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To save lives and bring **HOPE** to all
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SURVIVING SUICIDE - A JOURNEY OF HEALING & HOPE

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

2:15 -3:15 pm
Grande Ballroom
(Main Level)

**Coping with Grief Through Expressive Art****Dennis Liegghio**

Founder/Executive Director, KnowResolve

During this immersive, interactive, and unique session, attendees will learn about the vital role that art-making plays in coping with grief and loss, and how to implement a practice that can open doors to healing.

Dennis Liegghio is the founder and executive director of KnowResolve, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting mental health and preventing youth suicide. After losing his father to suicide as a teen, Dennis turned to songwriting to cope with the trauma and grief. Since 2007, he has spoken to more than 185,000 teens and adults about mental health and the power of creativity through the lens of lived experience.

#2025KSLIFEWORHLIVING

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Keynote Presentation

Breakout Session

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“ Let us be kind, one to another,
for most of us are fighting a hard battle. ”

— Ian MacLaren

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Kathleen McGovern
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Spreading Hope, Saving Lives, Building Communities

We proudly support Kevin's Song in their mission to save lives through suicide prevention education and to offer hope and healing to survivors. By raising awareness, providing resources, and fostering inclusion, they make a vital impact in creating safer, more supportive communities. We're honored to stand with them in this essential work.

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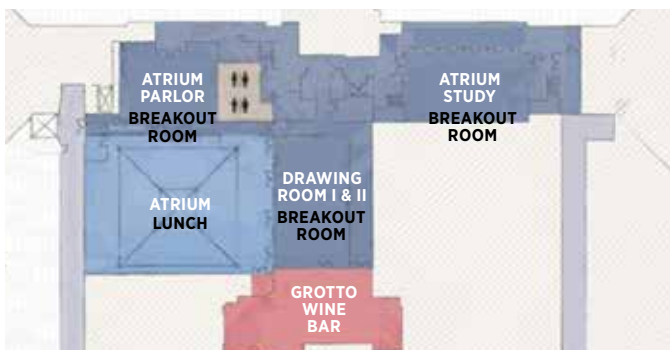
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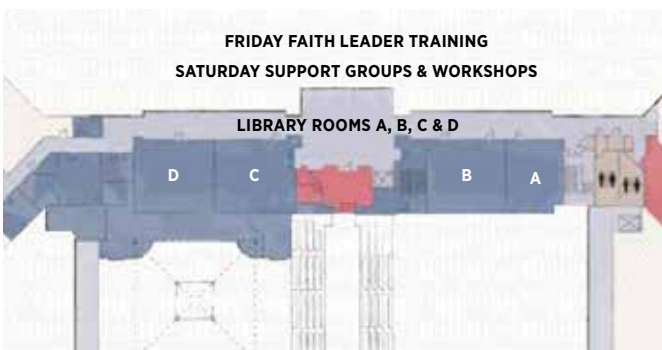
MAIN LEVEL



LOWER LEVEL



UPPER LEVEL



| EVENT | ROOM | LOCATION |
|---|---|-------------|
| Registration | Provincial Ballroom | Main Level |
| Continuing Education | Provincial Ballroom | Main Level |
| Keynote Sessions | Grande Ballroom | Main Level |
| Saturday Survivor Program | Grande Ballroom | Main Level |
| Conference Breakouts | Grande Ballroom | Main Level |
| Conference Breakouts | Atrium Study, Atrium Parlor, Drawing Rooms I and II | Lower Level |
| Memorial Forest | The Abbey | Main Level |
| Saturday Support Group Breakouts | Library Room A, Library Room C and Library Room D | Upper Level |
| Breakfast, Dessert and Snacks | Garden Gallery | Main Level |
| Lunch for Conference | The Atrium | Lower Level |
| Lunch (Saturday) | Grande Ballroom | Main Level |
| Marx Layne Reception (Thursday evening) | Garden Gallery | Main Level |
| Saving A Life Dinner (Thursday evening) | Grande Ballroom | Main Level |
| Resource Gallery | Garden Gallery and Annex and Hallway | Main Level |
| Bookstore | Garden Gallery | Main Level |
| Speaker Check In | Provincial Ballroom | Main Level |
| Exhibitor Check In | Garden Gallery Bookstore | Main Level |
| Volunteer and Conference Office | Executive Boardroom | Main Level |
| Faith Leader Training and Lunch | Library Room A, Library Room C and Library Room D | Upper Level |

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stronger together.



Henry Ford Health is pleased to support Kevin's Song 9th annual conference and applaud their unwavering commitment to preventing suicide and offering hope and healing to survivors.

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