Suicide Prevention

Editor’s Corner

While many people experience sadness, depression, and anxiety this time of year, we know that suicide rates tend to decrease during the holidays. One reason is that people feel more connected with friends and family, whether because they’re physically close or caught up in the holiday season.

Great news, because December is “Write to a Friend Month!” It’s the perfect time to start letter writing, because hey, sending out Christmas cards is a common tradition. With that acceptable excuse, it’s easy to reach out to someone you may not have spoken with in a while. By making it a habit, these letters can be an extra lifeline to help you when you don’t feel at your best, especially when suicide rates rise in spring and summer.

I love receiving snail mail. In an age where it’s so much more convenient, fast, and cheap to send an email, receiving a letter is like getting a gift. It’s proof that someone cares about you so much that they went through the hassle of handwriting a letter, finding your mailing address, adding a stamp, and dropping it off at the post office. Well, at least that’s the millennial perspective.

Here are some suggestions to make your letters even cooler.

- Awesome postage stamps
- Personalized or manly stationary
- For ‘80s kids, scented stickers and pens!

Thanks!

Neetha

PS: Sorry for the short newsletter this month!
Suicide Prevention Plan Implementation (SPPI) Workgroup

In order to complete tasks in Governor Inslee’s Executive Order 16-02 on firearm fatality and suicide prevention, the Department of Health decided to form a committee to help with the implementation of the Washington State Suicide Prevention Plan. On November 3, the SPPI Workgroup had its first meeting. The meeting covered the history of the plan and the Executive Order, an overview of the state plan, an introduction to collaborating groups, and a brief explanation of the role of the SPPI Workgroup. If you would like to join the workgroup committee or receive updates about the group, please complete this form. Questions can be directed to the suicide prevention plan program manager.

Alternate Suicide Terminology

In the CDC’s publication Self-Directed Violence Surveillance – Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements, CDC not only provides a set of definitions for various forms of self-directed violence but the panel also lists “unacceptable terms” with alternate options. Here are their suggestions.

- **Completed suicide** - This terminology implies achieving a desired outcome whereas those involved in the mission of “reducing disease, premature death, and discomfort and disability” would view this event as undesirable.
  Alternate term: suicide

- **Failed attempt** - This terminology gives a negative impression of the person’s action, implying an unsuccessful effort aimed at achieving death.
  Alternate terms: suicide attempt or suicidal self-directed violence

- **Nonfatal suicide** – This terminology portrays a contradiction. “Suicide” indicates a death while “nonfatal” indicates that no death occurred.
  Alternate term: suicide attempt
- **Parasuicide** – Formally used to refer to a person’s self-directed violence whether or not the individual had an intent to die. However, the World Health Organization is now favoring the term suicide attempt. Alternate terms: non-suicidal self-directed violence or suicidal self-directed violence

- **Successful suicide** – This term also implies achieving a desired outcome whereas those involved in the mission of “reducing disease, premature death, and discomfort and disability” would view this event as undesirable. Alternate term: suicide

- **Suicidality** - This terminology is often used to refer simultaneously to suicidal thoughts and suicidal behavior. These phenomena are vastly different in occurrence, associated factors, consequences and interventions so should be addressed separately. Alternate terms: suicidal thoughts and suicidal behavior

- **Suicide gesture, manipulative act, and suicide threat** – Each of these terms gives a value judgment with a pejorative or negative impression of the person’s intent. They are usually used to describe an episode of nonfatal, self-directed violence. A more objective description of the event is preferable such as non-suicidal self-directed violence or suicidal self-directed violence.

### December National Observances

More than **1.2 million** people in the US are living with HIV infection

December is World AIDS Month, a time to raise awareness and destigmatize HIV and AIDS. AIDS.gov has information, resources, and events.

When I taught public health in Kenya, I would often visit schools and give basic presentations on HIV/AIDS. After one presentation, one of the teachers said that everyone with HIV should be put on an island. I was stunned that such ignorance was coming from an educator. Yet, that example perfectly sums up the stigma around HIV/AIDS. Rather than empathizing that someone has to endure the emotional and physical struggles of a chronic disease, sometimes the initial reaction is fear and self-preservation. Like many people living with chronic illness or pain, people with HIV/AIDS have increased rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide. The added social stigma increases that burden. If you want to learn more, AIDS.gov offers a list of webinars.
December is also National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. Impaired driving refers to distracted driving, drugged driving, and drunk driving. With snow and icy roads, these behaviors increase car accidents and injuries. However, a recent report shows that for youth ages 10-14, the rate of suicide now outnumbers the rate of fatal car accidents. Making mental health a priority is just as important as buckling up in the car.

The Holiday Blues

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) posted the graphics below last year in preparation for the holiday season. See its website to download the graphics and to watch a video about managing your physical and mental health.
Book Quote
Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*

“And once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about.”
Upcoming Conferences and Events

December 2
Deadline for NIMH’s Request for Applications

December 5-6
Vancouver
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

December 5-7
Palm Springs, CA
2016 OJJDP Tribal Youth Conference
Walking with Youth: Trauma Informed, Culturally Based Justice and Healing Conference

December 7
Seattle
20th Annual King County Behavioral Health Legislative Forum

December 7
Deadline for Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant

December 7
Webinar
Understanding Trauma Informed Care

December 7-9
San Diego, CA
Positive Culture Framework (PCF) Public Training

December 8
Webinar
After a Suicide: The Zero Suicide Approach to Postvention in Health and Behavioral Healthcare Settings

December 8
Webinar
Listening Session on SMAIF and HIV among Transgender Women of Color

December 8
Mukilteo
Teen Dating Abuse and Prevention Forum

December 8-10
Agua Caliente Reservation, CA
15th National Indian Nations Conference: Justice for Victims of Crime

December 12
Seattle, WA
safeTalk for Military and Veteran Service Providers

December 13
Seattle
Forefront’s Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR) Training

DOH 346-066 December 2016
December 14
Webinar
Recognizing and Responding to Vicarious Trauma in Fatality Review

December 14
Webinar
Making Children and Families a Public Priority: The Proposal to Create a State Department for Children, Youth, and Families

December 19
Deadline for AAS’s Morton M. Silverman Student Award
The student award entry (20 pages, double-spaced, in APA format, with 100-150 word abstract, references, tables, and figures, etc., on separate pages) should be submitted by email attachment to Thomas Joiner (joiner@psy.fsu.edu).

January 13, 2017
Application deadline for travel award
Military Suicide Research Consortium (MSRC) Pre-conference Research Training Day (held on April 26 before the AAS conference)

February 2-3, 2017
Orange Beach, AL
7th Annual National Peer Program Conference

February 20, 2017
Olympia
Save the Date: NAMI Lobby Day

March 7, 2017
Wenatchee
Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR) free training

March 15, 2017
Shoreline
Washington State Nurses Association Suicide Prevention Training

April 2, 2017
Seattle

April 3-5, 2017
Seattle
2017 National Council Conference: The Intersection of Innovation and Action

April 26, 2017
Phoenix, AZ
Military Suicide Research Consortium (MSRC) Pre-conference Research Training Day (part of AAS conference) Travel award (deadline January 13, 2017)

April 26-27, 2017
Seattle
2016 The Science of HOPE Conference

April 26-29, 2017
Phoenix, AZ
American Association of Suicidology’s Suicidology at 50: Honoring the Past, Innovating the Future
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See the DOH Suicide Prevention Events page for more events. If you would like to share an event, send information to suicidepreventionplan@doh.wa.gov.