

What You Can Do to Save a Life from Suicide

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.
Director of Research & Education
The Glendon Association
Senior Editor
PsychAlive



Glendon.org



PsychAlive.org

FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE

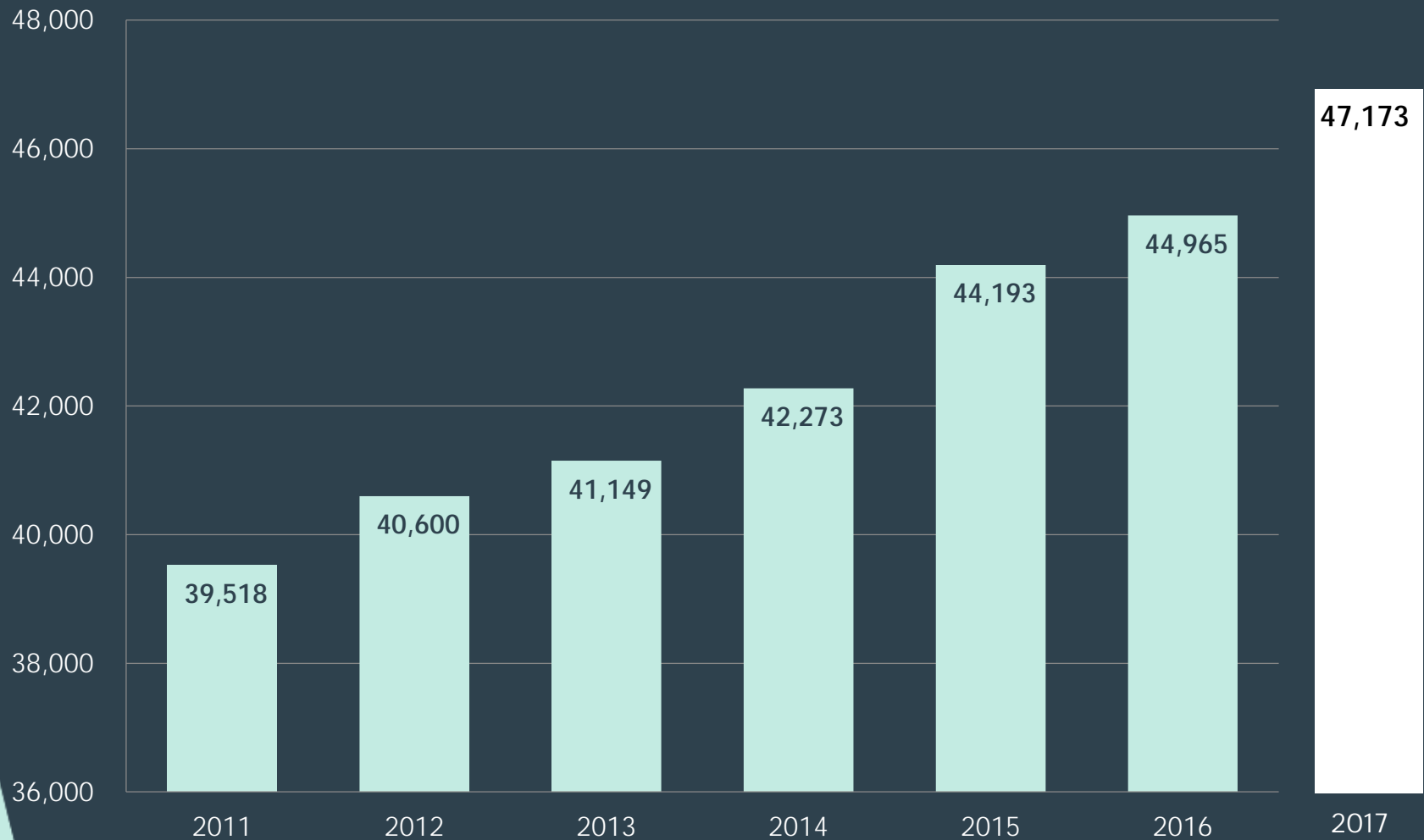
Every 40 seconds a life is lost to suicide, which means that each year we lose nearly 1 million people to suicide. (WHO)

For every one person who dies by suicide, 20 or more attempt to end their lives.

Worldwide, more people die by suicide (800,000) than from all homicides (475,000) and wars combined.

The suicide rate in the United States increased by 24 percent between 1999 and 2014.


Annual Number of USA Suicides




SOURCE: American Association of Suicidology

POLL


Have you:




Known
someone
who's lost
their life to
suicide?



Worked with
someone
who's
suicidal?



Known
someone
who's
struggled
with feeling
suicidal?



Struggled
with suicidal
thoughts
yourself?



The Suicidal Mode

Experienced as:

- Mental pain
- Strong feelings of anger, anxiety, embarrassment, humiliation and shame
- Dissociative symptoms such as emotional numbing, detachment from body, and indifference to physical pain (Orbach, 1994)



The Suicidal Mode

In suicidal mode, the cognitive system is characterized by the suicidal belief system, with core beliefs such as:

- Feeling helpless (“I can’t do anything about my problems”)
- Being unlovable (“I don’t deserve to live, I am worthless”)

How Does a Suicide Occur?

Underlying Vulnerability

e.g.: Mood Disorder / Substance Abuse / Aggression / Anxiety / Impulsivity/ Sexual Orientation/ Abnormal Serotonin Metabolism/ Family Characteristics, including history of suicidality/ Sexual Abuse/Physical Abuse/Social adversity



Stress Event

(often caused by underlying condition)

*e.g.: In Trouble With Law or School / Loss/ **Bullied***



Acute Mood Change

Anxiety/Dread/Hopelessness/Anger

Inhibition

*e.g.: Family cohesion/Religiosity / Available Support/ **Internet/ Help-seeking attitudes***



Survival

Facilitation

*e.g.: Method/Weapon available / Recent example / Media displays/ **Internet***



Suicide

Gould, 2012

Those Who Desire Suicide



Joiner, Thomas. *Why People Die By Suicide*. "The Three Components of Completed Suicide." Harvard University Press, 2005.

Three-Step Theory of Suicide

1) Are you in pain and hopeless?



2) Is your pain greater than your connectedness?

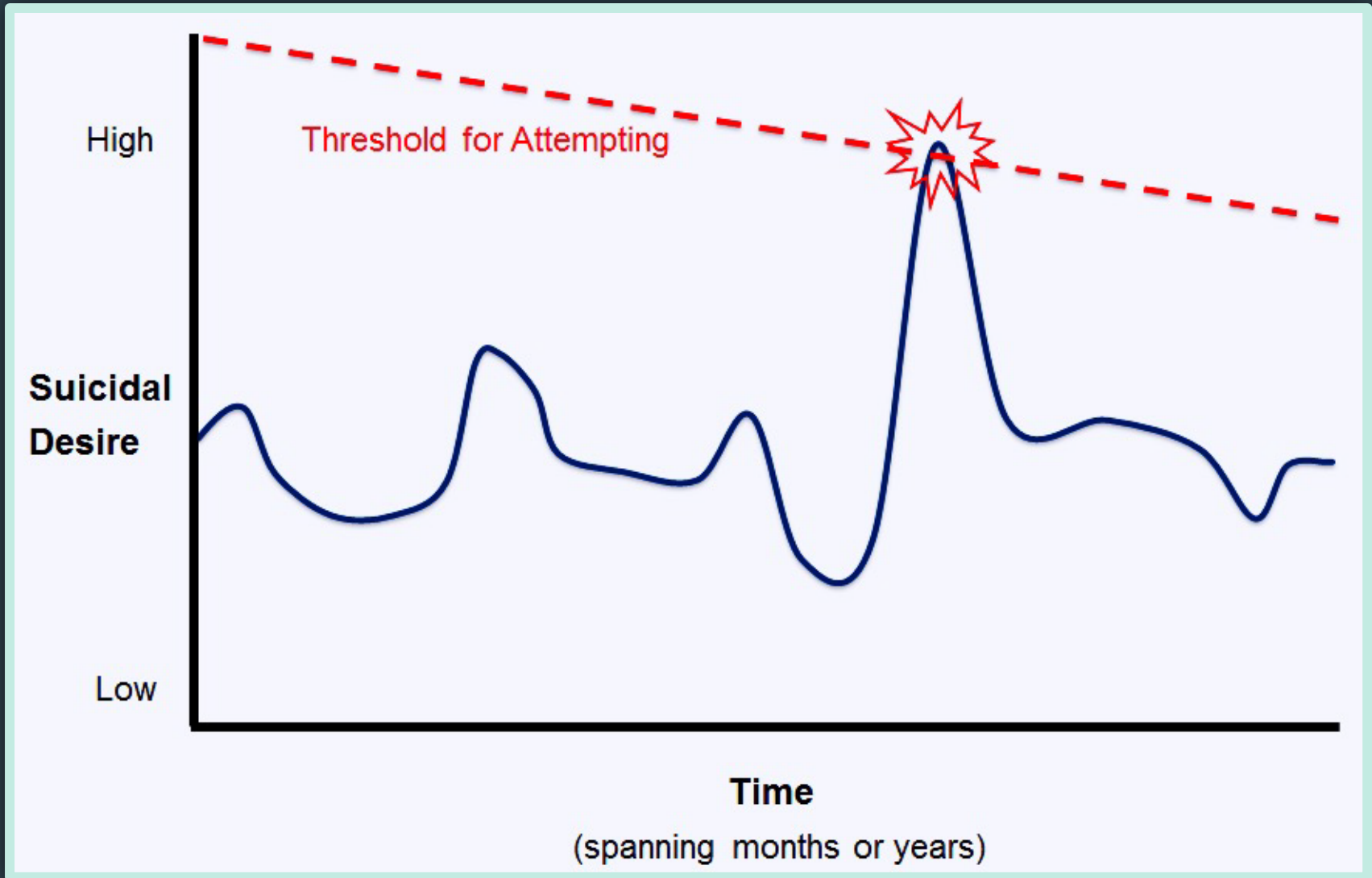


3) Are you capable of attempting suicide?



SOURCE: Klonsky, D. & May, A.,
International Journal of Cognitive
Therapy, 2015

Plot Desire & Capability Together Over



Warning Signs for Suicide

Seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK if you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs:



Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep or sleeping all the time



Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself



Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means



Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person

Warning Signs for Suicide

Seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK if you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs:



Feeling hopeless



Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities—seemingly without thinking



Feeling trapped—like there's no way out



Increasing alcohol or drug use

Warning Signs for Suicide

Seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK if you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs:



Withdrawing from friends, family, and society



Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge



Experiencing dramatic mood changes



Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life

Protective Factors

Family and
community
connections/
support



Clinical Care
(availability and
accessibility)



Protective Factors

Resilience



Coping Skills



Protective Factors

Frustration
tolerance
and emotion
regulation



Cultural and
religious beliefs;
spirituality





TALK to friends.
Be the one who will
listen and help.



BeThe1To.com (2016)

You can do something to prevent suicide. #BeThe1To save a life.

JOIN US NOW



Be the One to Help

For 2016's National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, join the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and partners to spread the message that we can all take action to prevent suicide, and that healing, hope and help can happen.



Spread the Message

Download our toolkit and get the 5 steps to help someone in crisis. Then share the #BeThe1To message throughout September.



Connect with Stories

Read and watch stories of individuals who have made an impact in others' lives. Then submit your own.



Watch the Live Stream

Help change the conversation. Watch our Facebook Live event and add your questions and thoughts in the comments.

#BeThe1To Action Steps



Find out why this can save a life at
www.BeThe1To.com
If you're struggling, call the Lifeline at
1-800-273-TALK (8255)



Find out why this can save a life at
www.BeThe1To.com
If you're struggling, call the Lifeline at
1-800-273-TALK (8255)



Find out why this can save a life at
www.BeThe1To.com
If you're struggling, call the Lifeline at
1-800-273-TALK (8255)



Find out why this can save a life at
www.BeThe1To.com
If you're struggling, call the Lifeline at
1-800-273-TALK (8255)



Find out why this can save a life at
www.BeThe1To.com
If you're struggling, call the Lifeline at
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Develop an Action Plan



Be
specific

Details about what's to be done must be clearly understood. Being specific is very important. Leaving things vague and non-specific can be dangerous.

Develop an Action Plan



**Be
specific**

**Limit
objectives**

Remember that your job is to help until the immediate danger, or threat of suicide, has passed. The action plan is not meant to be a total solution for all the person's problems. Be realistic. Do not make false promises or resort to phony statements (For example: "It will be okay.")

Develop an Action Plan



**Be
specific**

**Limit
objectives**

**Work
together**

Both you and the person at-risk are committing to fulfilling your responsibilities according to the plan. You are mutually.

Develop an Action Plan



Confirm
the
commit-
ment

The person at-risk agrees not to engage in any self-harming behavior for an agreed upon time. Ask the person to repeat the agreement out loud; both of you will experience a feeling of relief.

Develop an Action Plan



Confirm
the
commit-
ment

Develop
crisis
control

↓

Build in some arrangement for emergency support if the steps of your plan for action cannot be carried out or if the commitment cannot be maintained until the set follow-up time. (For example, have the person call the local suicide hotline or national suicide hotline **1-800-273-TALK.**)

Develop an Action Plan



**Confirm
the
commit-
ment**

**Develop
crisis
control**

**Spell out
the
follow-up**

Set the date and time for another meeting between you and the person at-risk, or between the person at risk and whatever follow-up resources you have agreed to (such as meeting with the school counselor.)

Recognize signs you're getting into a suicidal crisis.

Recognize specific actions you'll take when you start to feel bad. These will help interfere with two behaviors that fuel a suicidal state: passivity and isolation.



Coping

What activity are you going to do to make yourself feel better? (i.e. take a walk, play with your dog, bake brownies, meditate, watch a funny movie)



Suggestions

Where are you going to go to be with people and take your mind off your negative thoughts? (i.e. to the mall, to the park, to an athletic event)



Who are you going call to talk to? (ie: a specific friend, relative, minister) Make sure that you have that person's phone number



Coping

Reduce the potential use of lethal means



Suggestions

And finally, make sure that you have the Suicide Hotline Number – 1-800-273-TALK (8255) – in your phone





Preparing for future crises: What a Crisis Response (Safety) Plan Is



A memory aid to facilitate early identification of emotional crises



A checklist of personalized strategies to follow during emotional crises



A problem solving tool



A collaboratively-developed strategy for managing acute periods of risk

What a Crisis Response (Safety) Plan Is NOT

1 a no-suicide contract

2 a no-harm contract

3 a contract for safety

6

Steps of Crises Response/ Safety Planning

Step 1: Recognizing warning signs

Step 2: Using internal coping strategies

Step 3: Utilizing social contacts that can serve as a distraction from suicidal thoughts and who may offer support

Step 4: Contacting family members or friends who may offer help to resolve the crisis

Step 5: Contacting professionals and agencies

Step 6: Reducing the potential for use of lethal means

Safety Plan App



MY3 App



Create your support system.

Add the contact information of the 3 people you feel you would like to talk to when you are having thoughts of suicide.



Build your safety plan.

Customize your safety plan by identifying your personal warning signs, coping strategies, distractions and personal networks. This safety plan will be with you at all times and can help you stay safe when you start thinking about suicide. Learn more about [safety planning](#).



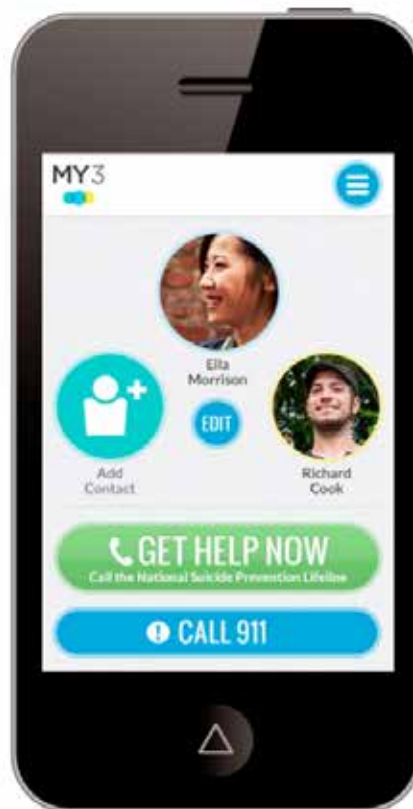
Access Important Resources.

Hold all your resources in the palm of your hand. Whether you're a veteran, want support from your local community, or want to learn more about suicide prevention, pick the resources that best support you.



Get support at times of greatest risk.

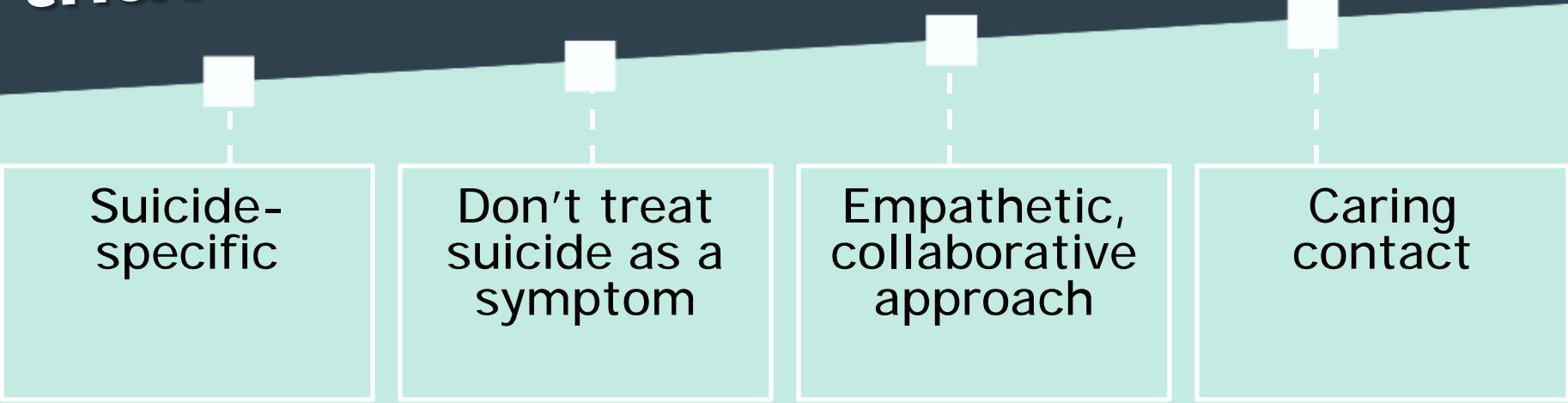
When you're having thoughts of suicide and it feels like there's no hope in sight, find support at your fingertips at any time of the day.





THERAPIES THAT WORK

What do the treatments that work have in common?



A diagram with a dark blue upper triangle and a light teal lower trapezoid. Four white squares are arranged in a horizontal line across the boundary. Dashed vertical lines connect each square to a white-bordered box below it. The boxes contain the following text from left to right: 'Suicide-specific', 'Don't treat suicide as a symptom', 'Empathetic, collaborative approach', and 'Caring contact'.

Suicide-specific

Don't treat suicide as a symptom

Empathetic, collaborative approach

Caring contact

What do the treatments that work have in common?



Follow up

The diagram consists of a dark blue triangular shape at the top pointing downwards. Below it, on a light teal background, are four light teal rectangular boxes arranged horizontally. Each box is connected to a small white square above it by a vertical dashed line. The white squares are positioned at regular intervals along a horizontal line that is slightly above the top of the boxes.

Help person
form
strategies for
themselves

Know their
personalized
warning signs

Use safety
plan or crisis
response
plan

Therapies that Work

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Marsha M. Linehan

<http://behavioraltech.org/resources/whatisdbt.cfm>

Collaborative Assessment & Management of Suicidality (CAMS)

David Jobes

<http://www.dcoe.mil/content/Navigation/Documents/SPC2012/2012SPC-Jobes-CAMS.pdf>

Brief Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (BCBT)

Craig Bryan & David Rudd

http://www.texassuicideprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/BCBT_workshop_slides.pdf

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)

Aaron Beck & Gregory Brown

<http://www.apa.org/pubs/books/4317169.aspx>

ASSIP

Konrad Michel

<https://www.amazon.com/Attempted-Suicide-Intervention-Program-Clinicians/dp/0889374767>

Our Approach to Suicide

Each person is divided:

Real Self – Positive



One part wants to live and is goal-directed and life-affirming.

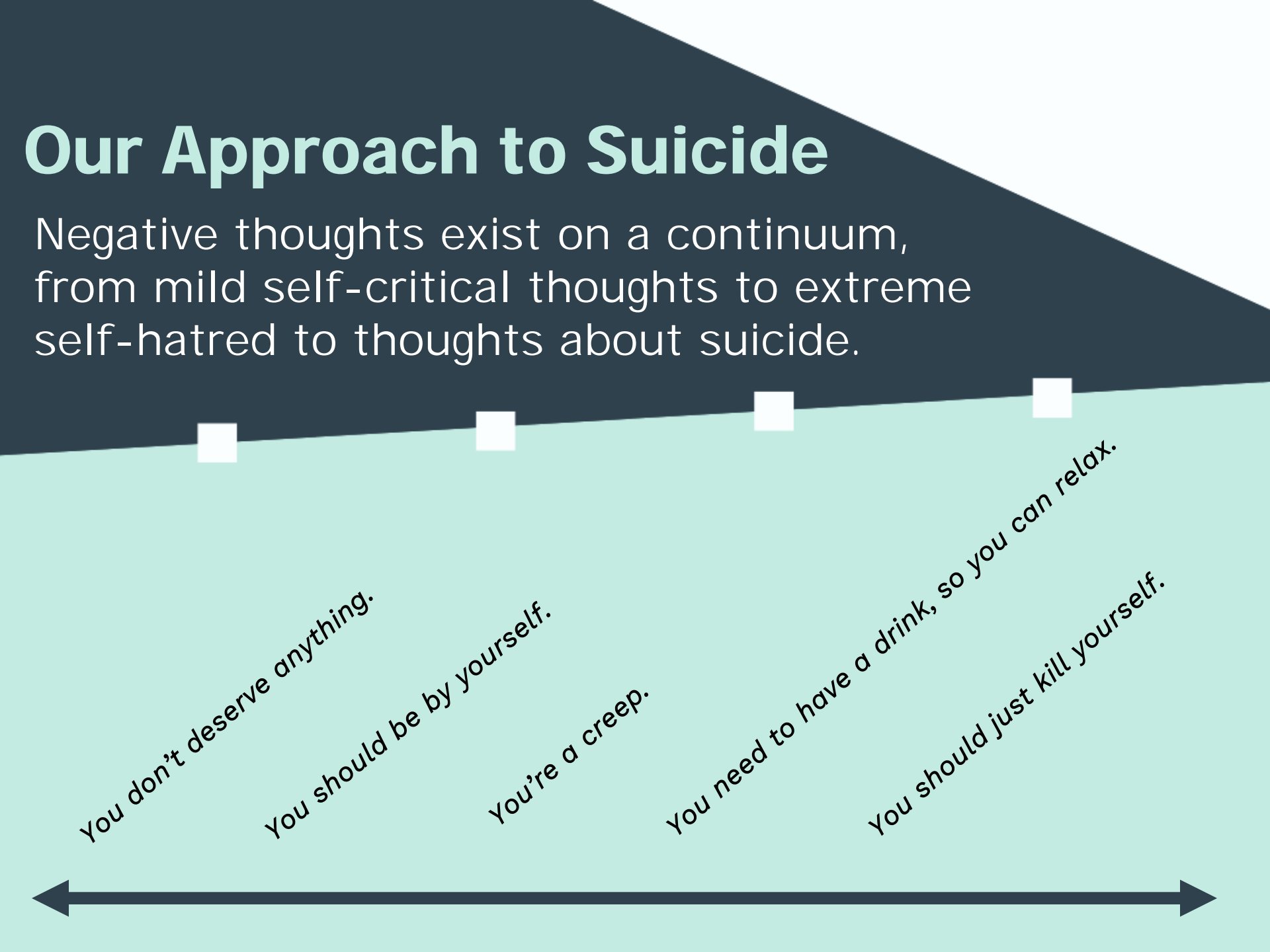
Anti Self – Critical



And one part is self-critical, self-hating and at its ultimate end, self-destructive. The nature and degree of this division varies for each individual.

Our Approach to Suicide

Negative thoughts exist on a continuum, from mild self-critical thoughts to extreme self-hatred to thoughts about suicide.



The diagram features a horizontal double-headed arrow at the bottom, spanning the width of the slide. Above this arrow, four white square markers are placed at regular intervals along a light teal background. The background is divided into two sections: a dark teal upper section containing the title and introductory text, and a light teal lower section containing the continuum markers and their corresponding thought examples. The thought examples are written in black text and are rotated diagonally to fit beneath the markers.

You don't deserve anything.

You should be by yourself.

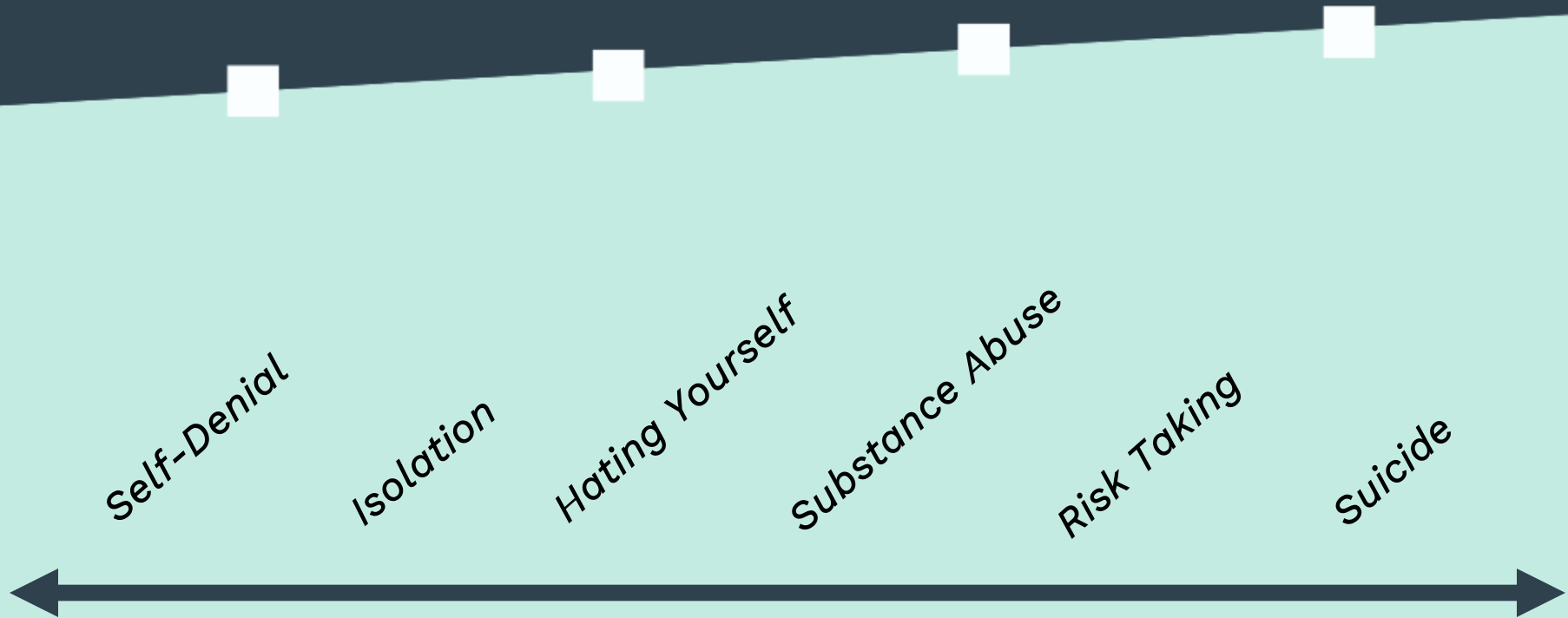
You're a creep.

You need to have a drink, so you can relax.

You should just kill yourself.

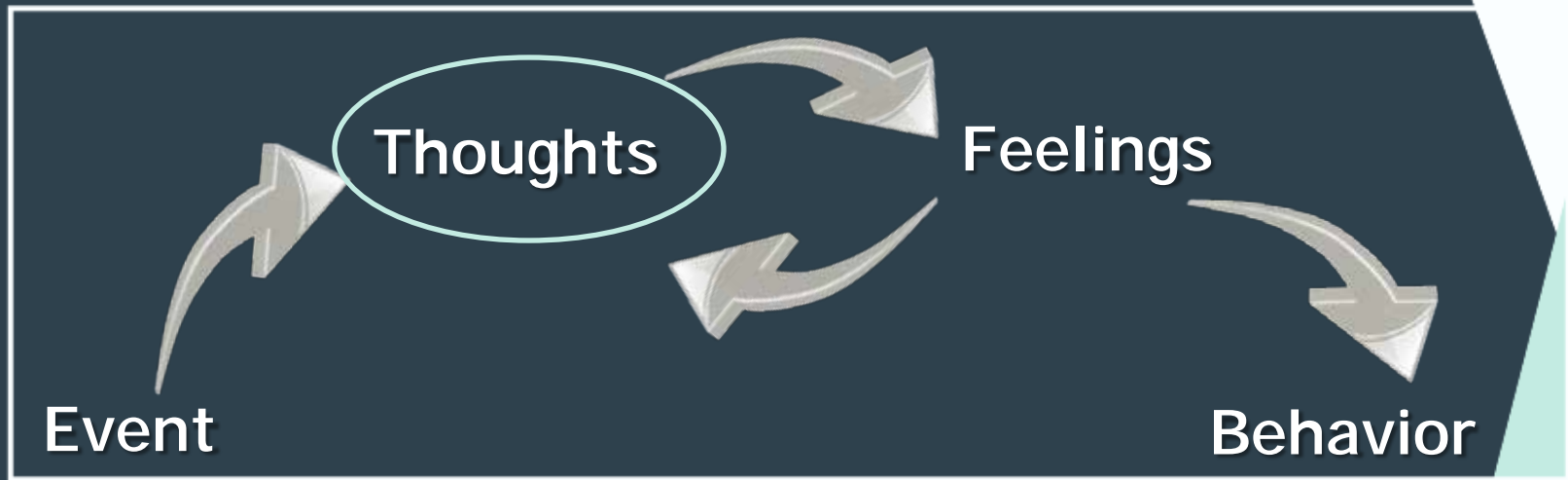
Our Approach to Suicide

Self-destructive behaviors exist on a continuum from self-denial to substance abuse to actual suicide.



Our Approach to Suicide

There is a relationship between these two continuums. How a person is thinking is predictive of how he or she is likely to behave.





Definition of the Voice

The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior.

A man with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and dark jeans, is sitting outdoors. He is looking down with a distressed expression, his right hand pressed against his forehead. The background is a soft-focus view of green foliage. A large, light teal diagonal stripe runs from the top left towards the bottom right, separating the image from the text area.

Definition of the Voice

This internal enemy fosters:

- Inwardness
- Distrust
- Self-criticism
- Self-denial
- Addictions
- A retreat from goal-directed activities

A man with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and dark jeans, is sitting outdoors. He is looking down with his right hand covering his face, appearing to be in deep thought or distress. The background is a blurred natural setting with green foliage. A large, light teal diagonal stripe runs across the image from the bottom left towards the top right.

Definition of the Voice

This “voice” affects every aspect of our lives:

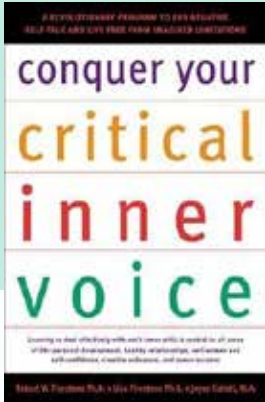
- Self-esteem/ confidence
- Personal relationships
- Performance (school/ work)
- ESPECIALLY self-destructive behavior

Self

Anti-Self



Exercise: Your Critical Inner Voice Attacks



Self-critical attacks as “I” statements

Examples:

I'm so ugly.

I'm look stupid.

I'm worthless.

Self-critical attacks as “you” statements

Examples:

You're so ugly.

You look stupid.

You're worthless.



Exercise: Keeping a Journal: Your Critical Inner Voice/ The Real You

My critical inner voice
as “you” statements

Examples:

*No one likes you.
They don't want you
around.*

The real me as “I”
statements

Examples:

*A lot of people like
me, and I add to the
situation.*



Exercise: A Plan for Action

**Actions dictated by
my inner critic:**

Examples:

*Don't bother trying. Just curl
up on the couch.*

You should just be alone.

*You can't trust anyone, so
don't get too close.*

**Actions to take that
reflect the real me:**

Examples:

*I want to be active and pursue
my goals.*

*I don't want to be isolated and
will seek out friends.*

*I want to stay vulnerable in my
relationships.*



Suicide Prevention: Making a Difference

Be Aware of the Do's...

- Be aware. Learn the warning signs.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Ask if she or he is thinking about suicide.
- Be direct. Talk openly and freely about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings.
Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available and take action.

Suicide Prevention: Making a Difference

... and the Don'ts

- Don't dare him or her to do it.
- Don't ask why. This encourages defensiveness.
- Offer empathy, not sympathy.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.

Common Emotions Experienced in Suicide Grief

- Shock
- Guilt
- Despair
- Stress
- Rejection
- Confusion
- Helplessness
- Denial
- **Anger**
- Disbelief
- **Sadness**
- Loneliness
- **Self-Blame**
- Depression
- Pain
- Shame
- Hopelessness
- Numbness
- Abandonment
- Anxiety

These feelings are normal reactions, and the expression of them is a natural part of grieving. Grief is different for everyone. There is no fixed schedule or one way to cope.

Self-Care & Help Seeking Behaviors

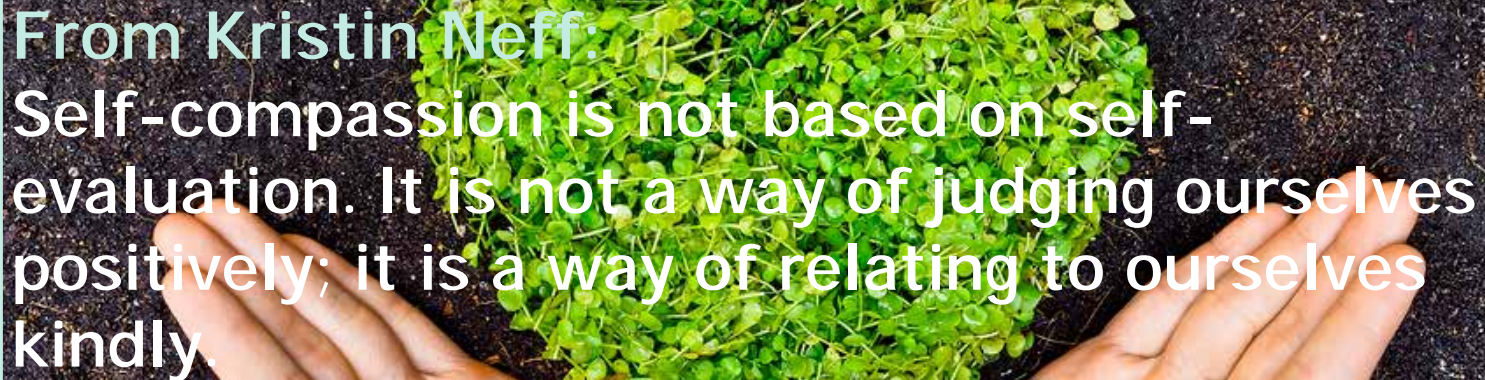
- Ask for help
- Talk to others
- Get plenty of rest
- Drink plenty of water, avoid caffeine
- Do not use alcohol and other drugs
- Exercise
- Use relaxation skills



Self-Compassion

A Healthier Way of Relating to Yourself

"Being touched by and not avoiding your suffering"

A photograph showing a pair of hands, palms up, holding a small, dense cluster of green, succulent-like plants growing out of dark, rich soil. The hands are positioned on either side of the plant, with fingers slightly spread, supporting it from below. The background is the dark soil, which contrasts with the vibrant green of the plant.

From Kristin Neff:
Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluation. It is not a way of judging ourselves positively; it is a way of relating to ourselves kindly

Three Elements:

1. Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment
2. Mindfulness vs. Over-identification with thoughts
3. Common humanity vs. Isolation

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1(800)273-8255

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

- Home
- Get Help
- Get Involved
- Learn More
- Crisis Centers
- About



Get Help For Someone Online

It can be scary when someone in your social media network mentions suicide. Bookmark these links so you can help a friend find hope.

Call 24/7
1-800-273-8255



**NATIONAL
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
LIFELINE**
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Are you in crisis?

[Click to Chat](#)

Follow us



More help for

[Veterans](#)

[Young Adults](#)

Why call?

[Who should call?](#)

[What happens when I call?](#)

No matter what problems you are dealing with, we want to help you find a reason to keep living. By calling **1-800-273-TALK** (8255) you'll be connected to a

For Help in Immediate Crisis

IF:

Someone is threatening to hurt or kill themselves

Someone is looking for ways to kill themselves:
seeking access to pills, weapons or other means

Call 911 or seek immediate help

SIGN UP AT
[http://psychalive.org
.pages.ontraport.net/
suicide-ecourse](http://psychalive.org/pages.ontraport.net/suicide-ecourse)



SUICIDE:

Effective Risk Assessment and Intervention

COMPREHENSIVE ONLINE SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

Starting in 2020, all California Psychologists are required to attend training in suicide therapies.

Complete this requirement now at your convenience with this state-of-the-art online course!

Register Now →

Course available September 1st, 2019
Register NOW for 20% discount!

In this Workshop you will learn to:

- Identify the most important techniques/tools for assessing suicidal risk
- Implement effective state-of-the-art crisis interventions for suicidal patients that will allow clinicians to practice to the standard of care
- Recognize innovative and effective suicide therapies that will allow clinicians to be more effective with suicidal clients
- Find effective coping strategies for the emotional impact of working with clients who attempt suicide or actually die by suicide

eCourses

See a full list of online courses at
ecourse.psychalive.org

Webinars

See a full list of upcoming and archived Webinars at psychalive.org



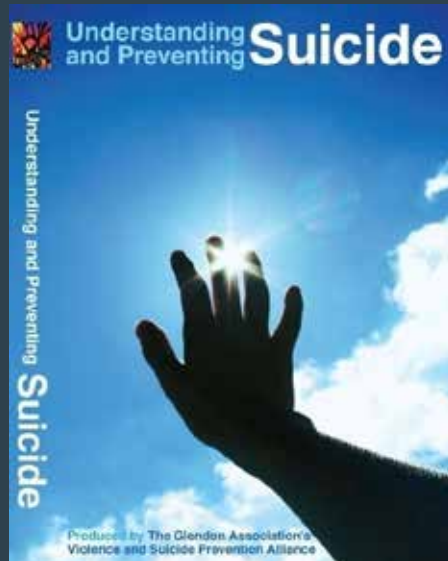
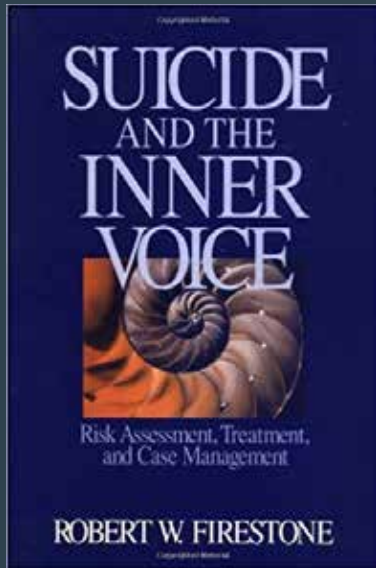
FEATURING:

- Dr. David Jobes
- Dr. John Draper
- Dese'Rae L. Stage

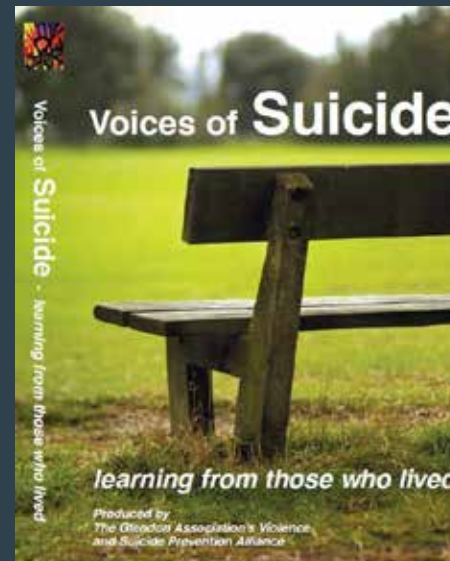
Websites

- **PSYCHALIVE.ORG – Suicide Prevention Advice Page**
<http://www.psychalive.org/2011/09/suicide-prevention-advice-2/>
- **National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention**
<http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/>
- **American Association of Suicidology's Survivors' Support Group Directory**
<http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/support-group-directory>
- **IASP Suicide Survivor Organizations (listed by country) -**
http://www.iasp.info/resources/Postvention/National_Suicide_Survivor_Organizations/

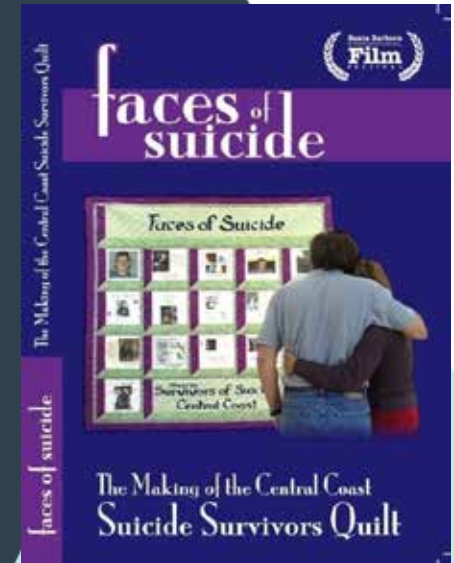
Books & Films



Public



Professionals



Survivors

Visit www.psychalive.org

Contact:

Email: Glendon@glendon.org
Phone: 800-663-5281



TWITTER

twitter.com/PsychAlive
twitter.com/drlisafirestone



FACEBOOK

facebook.com/PsychAlive
facebook.com/drlisafirestone



INSTAGRAM

instagram.com/psychalive



www.glendon.org



www.psychalive.org