

AFFECTS EVERYONE

Ability to help those in need

Important part of a safety net

Helps people through tough times

Provides purpose and decreases isolation

Provides hope and reason to live

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Denver, CO
Permit No. 491

REGIS
UNIVERSITY

3333 Regis Boulevard
Denver, Colorado 80221-1099

Partners:



Carson J. Spencer
FOUNDATION

The BACCHUS Network
Saving Lives Since 1976

With funding from:



Jefferson Unitarian Church

SPIRITUALITY & SUICIDE:

A Community of Faith in Dialogue

**Despite their differences, all faith traditions
have a common value: LIFE.**

SUICIDE AFFECTS EVERYONE

We have a shared responsibility to help those in need

Faith communities are an important part of a safety net

Helps people through tough times

Provides purpose and decreases isolation

Provides hope and reason to live

Suicide affects everyone.

- Every 16 minutes a person dies by suicide in the United States.
- For every suicide, there are an estimated minimum of 6 people profoundly affected by the loss.
- Chances are great that you or someone you know has been affected by suicide.

Know the Warning Signs

A useful mnemonic to remember warning signs for someone who might be considering suicide: IS PATH WARM ?

I—ideation (thoughts of suicide or dying)

S—substance abuse

P—purposelessness

A—anxiety

T—trapped

H—hopelessness

W—withdrawal

A—anger

R—recklessness

M—mood changes

These are warning signs. If you are worried about someone, the best thing to do is ask them if they are thinking of hurting themselves. Be ready to listen.

Each of us can play a role within our faith communities.

We can increase a sense of community

The community that forms around faith groups creates protective factors for suicidal individuals. A faith community can provide a sense of belongingness in an era when the availability of social networks is shrinking. Supportive relationships give people a reason to hope. A community where joy, pain, happiness and suffering can be shared is so important it can hold people through the worst times when almost nothing else is working.

We can bring hope through the tenets of faith

Despite their differences, all faith traditions have a common value: LIFE. Faith communities can offer individuals the ability to generate meaning in their own lives and in the life of the community. The major world religions profess that life is sacred and there is a call to promote reasons for living.

- “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)
- “No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.” - Buddha
- “O you who believe! Strengthen yourselves with resolution and prayer. Indeed Allah is with those who persevere in adversity.” - Qur’an, Al-Baqara, Surah 2:153

We can offer Pastoral Counseling

- Pastors and religious leaders may counsel and work with people who are experiencing pain and considering suicide as a way to escape.
- People also look to pastors in the aftermath of a suicide to help the bereaved family and community heal from the loss

How Can Faith Communities Get Involved?

1. Get Trained

Suicide prevention training is not for experts only—everyone has a chance to come into contact with someone in a suicidal crisis, and thus, many people can benefit from training in suicide prevention and intervention. Just like the model of CPR, you are not expected to have the highly technical skills of intervention, but you can sustain people and help link them to the experts. In faith communities, parents, youth leaders, pastoral counselors—even teen groups—can benefit from suicide prevention gatekeeper training. There are many different forms of this training; some last about an hour, others cover two days. Contact us for more information on training programs available to your community

2. Encourage help-seeking behavior

Faith community members can make a significant impact by promoting mental health as part of overall spiritual well-being. Members can model appropriate help-seeking behavior in all its forms, including attendance at support groups and pastoral care provided by the faith community. Frequent educational programs can foster dialogue around issues of mental health and suicide and bolster compassion. Communication to members can let them know that treatment works; there is hope, there is help.

3. Know local resources in your community

When someone is ready to seek help, faith communities should be prepared with a number of resources and referrals—brochures, fact sheets, phone numbers, websites, and a list of preferred providers are most useful when organized before a crisis. Several copies of these resources should be made available to different faith leaders and updated regularly.

4. Get Active

Faith communities can show solidarity and support for suicide prevention by participating in local suicide prevention events and by contributing to social action that promotes mental health.



After a suicide tragedy

Grief after suicide is often a complex path, one that is very different from other forms of loss. Faith communities that are prepared can foster incredible healing for those bereaved by suicide. Those who are not prepared may not only complicate the grief process for suicide survivors, they may also actually increase the risk of further suicides. Therefore, knowing best practices for suicide postvention is crucial.

- Learn about safe messaging strategies to reduce the suicide contagion (copycat) effect
- Know recommended memorial practices for death by suicide
- Support those bereaved by suicide (often called “suicide survivors”) with acts of kindness just like any other bereaved family (e.g., providing meals, home visits, etc.)

- Talk to survivors about the deceased -- they may need to tell their stories over and over
- Encourage survivors to seek out grief support for suicide specifically (and know resources in your area for suicide bereavement support groups or professional counseling)
- Check in with survivors on how they would like to be involved in the normal activities of the faith community
- Offer annual healing ceremonies for those bereaved by suicide (National Survivor Day is in November)

More Information

Contact Us:

Sally Spencer-Thomas
Carson J Spencer Foundation
Regis University
www.CarsonJSpencer.org
Sally@CarsonJSpencer.org
303-458-4323

Other useful websites:

- www.fiercegoodbye.com
- www.peoplepreventsuicide.org
- www.sprc.org/featured_resources/customized/clergy.asp
- www.qprinstitute.com

