

### Family Voice Bulletin – Issue 32 (March 8/2022) Suicide

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*Suicide can be a difficult and triggering topic. If you are in crisis, please connect with someone you trust. The Mental Health Crisis line is also available at [1+ \(866\) 996-0991](tel:18669960991).*

In this week's session, facilitators KJ Thomas, MSW, RSW and Robert Nettleton, MSW, RSW, were joined by Dr. Zachary Kaminsky Ph.D., the DIFD Mach-Gaensslen Chair of Suicide Prevention Research at The Royal. Dr. Kaminsky discussed the science behind suicide, including some psychological theories and underlying biology potentially predisposing someone to suicidal thoughts. To begin, he addressed the language around suicide. Often, we hear the term "committed suicide." This phrase echoes an era when suicide was thought of as a great sin, or crime. It has been replaced with "died by suicide."

Studying suicide informs intervention approaches. A number of factors can increase risk of suicide, including biological and environmental factors as well as adverse childhood incidents or traumatic events. Loss of connection or meaning, hopelessness, belief that others are "better off," or cognitive constriction are some of the reasons people lose hope and attempt suicide. Suicide is not always about a desire to die, but often a reaction to psychological pain. Emotion Dysregulation Theory involves a person feeling intense emotions, even having hypersensitivity in upsetting situations. This can link back to biological factors, increasing risk. Connecting to others we trust and moving towards disconnecting from stress can assist in keeping hope in our lives.

As a society, we have begun making steps to prevent suicide. This includes media reporting guidelines, restricted access to lethal means, gatekeeper training/national suicide prevention programs, and mental health awareness campaigns. We have begun highlighting and validating the importance of mental health care, thus reducing stigma and allowing people to talk more openly.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is a course that teaches helpful ways to assess risk of suicide and learn how to talk about it. It focuses on increasing a person's safety in the moment, and builds resources for a person through connection. A misconception is that talking about suicide with someone can put the idea in their head, but as ASIST teaches, talking about suicide can open conversation, lower anxiety, and reduce self-harm. Interventions focus on de-escalation of risk, and safety planning moving forward.

If you, or someone you know is at risk for suicide, please reach out and connect. While there are resources listed below, a trusted loved one, or even family or walk-in doctor can be a place to start. The Mental Health Crisis line is a 24/7 phone service with people ready to listen, and assist.

#### Resources

- [Home - Suicide Prevention Ottawa](#)
- [Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\) | CMHA Ottawa](#)
- [Supporting Parents of Suicidal Youth | Pleo](#)
- [AccessMHA.ca - free mental health and/or substance use/addiction support](#)
- [Counselling Connect: Free Phone or Video Counselling](#)