



More Religious Leaders Challenge Silence, Isolation Surrounding Suicide

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[NPR](#) [1]

Some religious leaders are playing an important role in preventing suicide by challenging the silence that surrounds it. Reverend Talitha Arnold of the United Church of Santa Fe encourages her congregants to talk openly about suicide, and includes both physical and mental health issues in the pastoral prayer to signal that it is safe to do so. In faiths that have traditionally considered suicide a sin, some religious leaders are helping to dispel the idea that mental illness is a spiritual failing. This shift in understanding has happened partly through training and peer support provided by groups such as the Muslim Mental Health Conference, which educates imams about mental health and suicide prevention. According to national data, the proportion of American congregations that offer mental health programming increased from 8 percent in 2006 to 23 percent in 2012. Such programming includes ministries, sermons, and expert speakers that address mental health concerns. "Where there's faith, there's hope, and where there's hope, there's life," said David Litts, who co-leads the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Faith Communities Task Force with Reverend Arnold.

Spark Extra! Read about the [Faith Communities Task Force](#) [2].

Links within this resource

[1] <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/02/11/583432455/more-religious-leaders-challenge-silence-isolation-surrounding-suicide>

[2] <http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/faith-communities-task-force>

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