

Grass Roots Cultural Change

TAKING IT TO THE STUDENTS



SAMHSA/CMHS GLS Suicide Prevention Grantee Meeting

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Charlie Morse, MA, Worcester Polytechnic institute

cmorse@wpi.edu

Larry Kohn, MS, Boston University

kohnman@bu.edu

Doug Johnson, PhD, The University of Maine

Doug_Johnson@umit.maine.edu

Bethany Asquith Walsh, MEd, The University of Maine

Bethany_asquith@umit.maine.edu

National Data on Students Considering Suicide

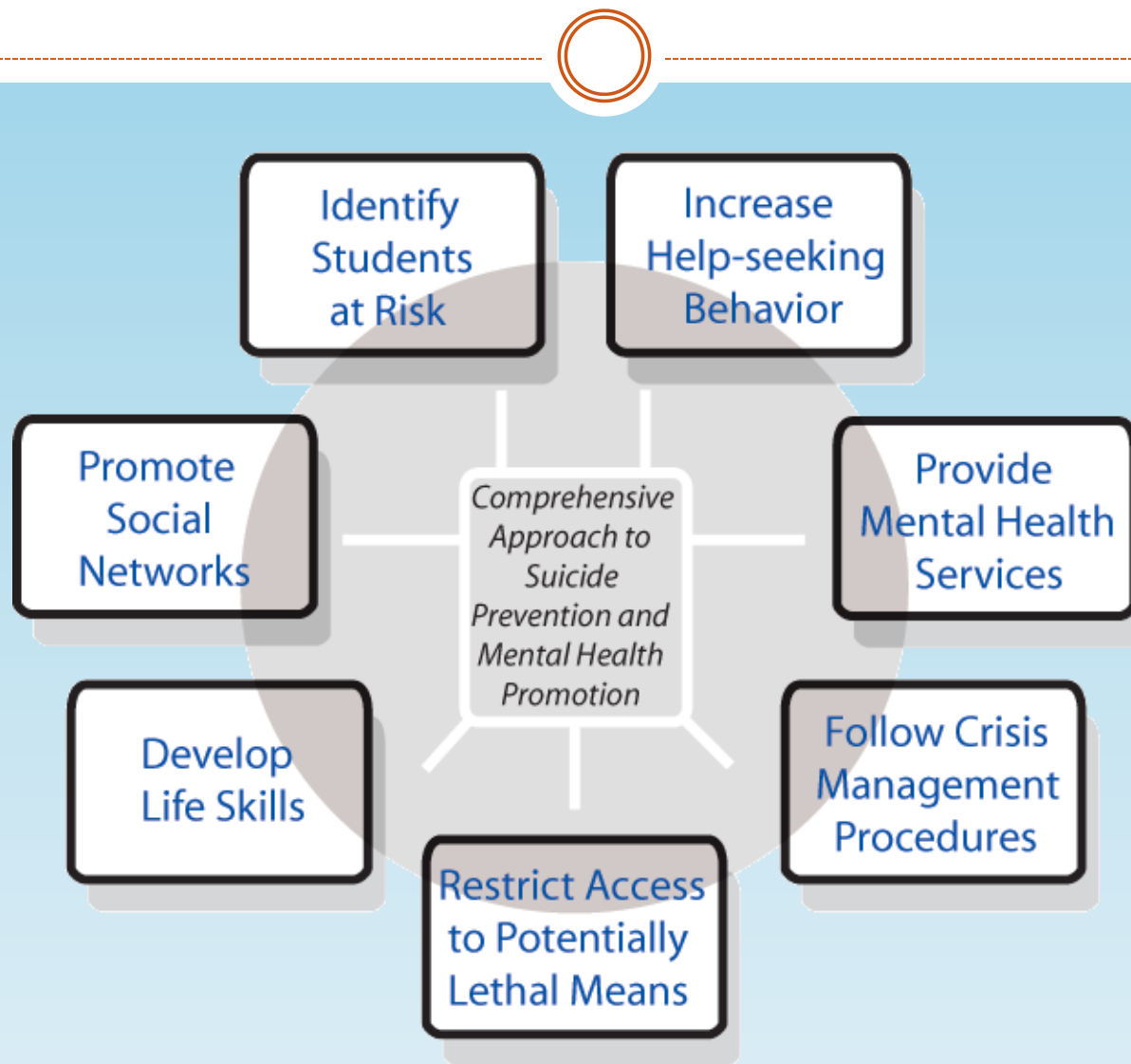


- 55% of students had experienced suicidal thoughts in their lifetime
- 46% never talk to anyone else about thoughts or suicidal attempts
- Of those who talked to others, 67% first told a friend/peer
- Of those who talked to others, 52% found it helpful and 58% were advised to seek professional help

Drum et al, 2009

National Research Consortium of Counseling Centers (June 2009 issue of *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*)

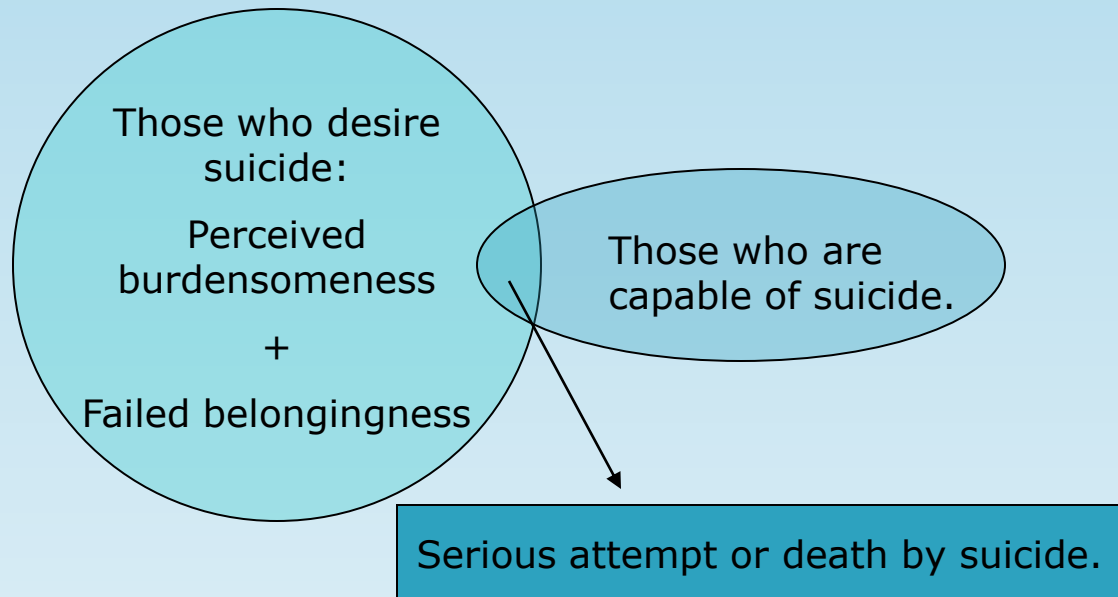
The Jed Foundation/SPRC Comprehensive Approach to Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion



Touchstone Project Philosophy



- Thomas Joiner
 - Why People Die by Suicide (2005)



Moving toward Social Justice



- Prevention targeted at the factors that create the context and conditions that can lead to suicide
 - “belonging” and “purpose”
- Creating a caring responsive campus culture
- Social Injustice
 - Any –ism
 - Ridicule
 - Exclusion
 - Rejection
 - Marginalization
 - Discrimination
 - Harassment



Today's College Student



- College students show rising rates of:
 - individualism, self-esteem, narcissism and positive self-views.
- **Empathic Concern** - over the misfortunes of others
 - 40% reduction in past 30 years
- **Perspective Taking** –ability to take others perspectives
- **Fantasy** – tendency to identify with fictional characters
- **Personal Distress** – anguish over misfortunes of others
 - ✦ “Changes in Dispositional Empathy in American College Students Over Time: A Meta-Analysis,” Sara Konrath



Engaging students IS suicide prevention!



- Our Educational System is designed to promote Social Justice
 - A sense of responsibility for each other's welfare
 - Bystander Intervention
- Everyone contributes to suicide prevention when they do their job well.
 - Faculty
 - Staff
 - Students



Who wants training?



- **Student Leaders**

- Highly functioning and involved
- Generally aware of services

- **Other Students**

- Variety of needs, functioning, and involvement on campus

- Students go to students for help

- Desire education, training, and resources to support interventions

- Want provide opportunities for personal development

- Resume-building



Touchstone Social Network



- A network of students trained in advance helping skills
- Training intended to be used through natural social networks
- Modeled after the BACCHUS Certified Peer Educator training
- **Topics covered include:**
 - Social Justice
 - Active listening
 - Bystander Intervention
 - Crisis prevention and Intervention
 - Boundaries and Self Care
 - Responding and Referral



Touchstone Peers



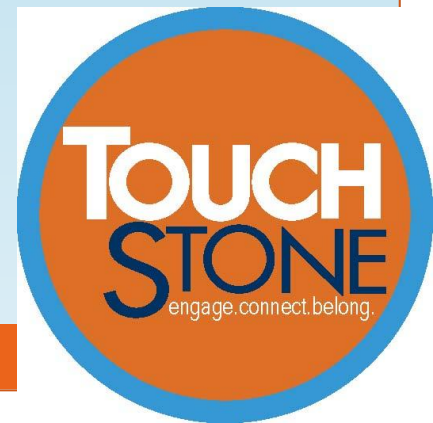
- Graduates from the Touchstone Social Network
 - Campaigns aimed at reducing barriers to services by increasing awareness and decreasing stigma
 - Engage with students to increase active engagement, connection, and belonging
 - Serve as a resource to students seeking to belong by staffing an office in the Student Union



Lessons Learned and Next Steps



- Students struggle with empathy and perspective-taking
- Students value relationships over ‘causes’
 - Struggle with defining what their ‘passion’ is
- Move away from didactic presentations toward experiential learning
 - Student Support Network



Next Steps: Sustainability



- Peer Education and Touchstone Peers merge
 - Combined goals of educating students and connecting to them individually

Touchstone Peers	Peer Educators
Staff Office	Staff Office
Health Campaigns and Marketing	Health Campaigns and Marketing
Public Health Approach	Public Health Approach
Mental Health, Wellbeing	Sexual Health, Wellbeing
One-on-one contact with students	Present material to groups



Awesome Outcomes



- **Touchstone Peer created support group**
 - Not affiliated with the Counseling Center- totally student run
 - 5-7 participants weekly

- **Anecdotes**
 - Students
 - Staff
 - Faculty
 - Counselors



Touchstone Project



- Faculty Staff Trainings
 - Touchstone Basics (10-15 minutes)
 - Touchstone Resource (2.5 hours)
- Student Trainings
 - Touchstone Gatekeeper (1.5 hours)
 - Touchstone Social Network (12 hour)
 - Touchstone Peers (ongoing)
- Touchstone Web
 - AFSP's Interactive Screening Program
 - Counseling Center Website



Touchstone Web



- Online ANONYMOUS depression screening
- Rated as:
 - Tier 1(A & B)– High Risk
 - Tier 2 – Moderate Risk
 - Tier 3 – Low Risk
- Personalized Feedback
 - From Counseling Center clinician
- Interventions offered:
 - Anonymous Dialogue with Counselor
 - Face to Face Counseling Session
 - Referral to a campus partner
 - Meeting with a Touchstone Peer
- Invitation or Self Referral



Existing Networks of Student Support



- Where are the naturally occurring networks of student support?
- Who are the individuals and groups within these networks who are most influential within a network of student support?

Student Support Network (SSN) Program Overview



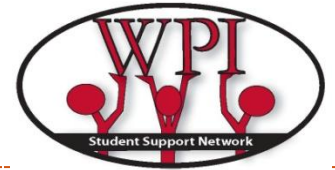
- Connecting with key students within a six week training series
- Both recruitment and welcoming all interested students
- Retaining student trainees during training
- Differentiating SSN from traditional peer education programs

Key elements of SSN Training



- Six week series with a primary focus on connection
- Experiential elements in every training
 - Visualization exercises, metaphor, role play
- Provide both knowledge and skills development
- Provide helpers with ongoing consultation and support

WPI Student Support Network (SSN)



- Identifying and selecting student participants
 - E-mail to faculty and staff
 - General advertising/programming
- Training SSN participants (6 week training)
 - Knowledge
 - Skills
 - Perspectives/Stigma reduction
 - Connection

SSN Knowledge Areas



- **Mental Health Concerns**
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Self-harm
 - Suicide
 - Substance Abuse
- **Orientation to Available Resources**

SSN Skill Areas



- **Providing support in the moment**
 - Listening/empathy (the hammer)
 - Resist urges to fix
 - Acceptance
- **Successfully connecting friends with help**
 - Process orientation
 - Stages of change model
 - Working with resistance

SSN Perspectives



- De-stigmatizing view of mental health
 - Normalization of struggles
 - Functional vs. Diagnostic descriptions
 - “It’s not us and them...it’s us and us”
- Enhancing Connection
 - Networking within support system
 - Helping the helpers
 - Enhancing a community of support

Empowering and Supporting Student Initiatives



- Specialized training offered in key areas
- Supporting additional opportunities for student involvement
 - Programming
 - Marketing
- Feeds existing and new traditional Peer Ed
- Active Minds at WPI

SSN Outcomes



- Over 270 students trained in the past four years
- Significantly enriched and expanded traditional peer education/support programs
- 4x increase in the number of students consulting with concerns about a friend
- Evidence of campus cultural enrichment
- Generating grass roots support