

OFFICE OF SUICIDE AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

'TIS THE SEASON: FOR DEPRESSION??

Evidence suggests that holiday depression is about as real as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. The mental health of Americans does not fall apart in December. In one of the largest studies that examined seasonal trends, researchers examined 3,670 suicides and 3,300 psychiatric admissions the Veteran Affairs Medical Center in Durham, NC. An increase was not found in suicides or psychiatric admissions around Christmas or New Year's.

According to researchers at the Mayo clinic in Minnesota, suicide is not linked to holidays. In a study of all reported suicides in Olmstead County, Minnesota during a 35-year period, more suicides did not occur just before, during, or after Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's holidays. The study supported findings of other studies demonstrating that suicides are more numerous early in the week and least common on the weekends. The study's authors opined that fewer suicides than expected may occur on weekends and major holidays because it may be easier to repress troublesome thoughts during these times of greater social interaction.

Other studies verified that the national suicide rates in December and January were either average or below average.

Experts suggest that while the holidays are stressful, the holidays also bring increased levels of emotional support from families and friends that help those cope that otherwise may experience depression.

Be realistic, plan ahead, and seek support

Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. If the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past, you may be more susceptible to stress and depression. The Mayo clinic staff recommends the following tips to prevent holiday stress and depression BEFORE your stress is at its peak:

- 1) Acknowledge you feelings
- 2) Reach out
- 3) Be realistic
- 4) Set aside differences
- 5) Stick to a budget
- 6) Plan ahead
- 7) Learn to say no
- 8) Don't abandon healthy habits
- 9) Take a breather
- 10) Seek professional help if you need it

Do you feel depressed around the holidays?

You are not alone particularly if you are a senior or a woman. Two-thirds of survey respondents reported feeling depressed

ISSUE 6, DECEMBER 2012

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during the holidays, even to the extent of not participating in the season's activities. There can be many reasons. The loss of an important person in the last year, the anniversary of a loss or traumatic event can make memories come back that can dampen spirits. The survey demonstrates that many women unnecessarily suffer from depression during the holidays. The women reported not attending parties, decorating, shopping or giving presents due to their depression. They also reported drinking too much and said stress and anxiety, not family, gifts, or holiday cheer, were their first thoughts about the holiday season.

Even in an un-depressed state, the holidays are stressful and often disappointing. Some experts blame it on factors relating to nutrition. Some nutritional experts believe that depression is caused by the excessive sugar and fatty foods we consume.

Holiday depression occurs when grand holiday expectations do not align with the reality of bickering in-laws, teenagers with attitude, disappointing gifts, and over-limit credit cards. It happens as soon as we hear the sound of relatives resuming their old familiar, dysfunctional roles in the family.

More than half the women surveyed agreed that there are ways to help prevent the onset of depression. These include setting realistic expectations, exercising, establishing a budget, and volunteering to help those in need.

People who do not view themselves as depressed may develop stress responses such as headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating, and difficulty sleeping. Others may experience post-holiday sadness after New Year's/January 1st. This can result from built-up expectations, disappointments from the previous year, coupled with stress and fatigue.

The election results: A triumph for marriage equality... and, perhaps, mental health

Kelly Brown

The 2012 election brought landmark changes for human rights, not only for the three states that voted for marriage equality (and the one that denied banning it), but perhaps for the entire nation. The results signify a shift in America's attitudes of acceptance toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. Some predict the election marks the beginning of a revolution in LGBT rights in this country, and that other states will soon follow suit in adopting similar policies. Clearly, the election marks a victory for the support of marriage equality, but what does any of this have to do with mental health?

According to multiple studies, LGBT individuals may be at greater risk for mental health issues and suicidal ideation compared to their heterosexual peers. Some U.S. studies report that prevalence of suicide attempts is approximately two to six times higher among LGB adolescents and adults. However, it is essential to interpret this information with caution. There is no inherent association between the presence of mental health problems and identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. In other words, being gay, in itself, does not cause suicide. However, certain "minority stressors," such as individual and institutional discrimination associated with one's sexuality, directly contribute to adverse mental health outcomes. The 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention indicates that institutional discrimination "results from laws and public policies that create inequities or omit LGBT people from benefits and protections afforded others." In addition to depriving an individual of their basic rights, the public discourse associated with institutional discrimination is often filled with negativity and intolerance. This can cultivate a community in which LGBT's are subject to a multitude of additional stressors such as rejection, hostile interactions, and even hate crimes. Moreover, some LGBT individuals may begin to internalize antigay attitudes, which can lead to identity conflict and increased vulnerability to stress. Studies have shown individual and institutional discrimination are associated with risk factors such as social isolation, low self-esteem, negative sexual/gender identity, and mental health problems, all of which can lead to suicidal ideation and behavior. In fact, one particular study conducted by Yale and Columbia found significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, and alcohol use disorders among LGB respondents who were living in states with discriminatory policies. On the other hand, research has indicated positive impacts and improved health outcomes associated with social and legal recognition of same-sex marriage. Attenuated effects of stigma and increased access to health care via marriage benefits are just some of the ways risk factors have been reduced by changes in public policy. Thus, organizations such as the Action Alliance recommend efforts to reduce discriminatory laws. Even so, organizations such as the Trevor Project caution us to avoid inferring that any specific law, policy, or lack thereof will directly prevent suicide. Indeed, suicide is a complex phenomenon that is not easily understood and cannot be explained by any one particular stressor or life event. In fact, oversimplifying can establish a dangerous risk of contagion among those who are already vulnerable. Nevertheless, constructing changes in public policy is a valuable and necessary start for reducing risk within the LGBT community.

MEET THE SVP TEAM!



From left: Dr. Lee Ann Lehman, Dr. Douglas Flemons, Oren Schwartz, Dr. Scott Poland, Melissa Jackson



NSU 's co-director of the Office of Suicide and Violence Prevention, Dr. Scott Poland, conducted a webinar with Well Aware entitled *Crisis Response: When a Student Dies By Suicide*. In this webinar, Dr. Poland provides examples of evidence-based practice on what should and should not occur in the aftermath of student suicide on campus.

Previous Well Aware webinars include *Youth Suicide Clusters: What you must know to recognize and respond to a youth suicide contagion*; *Myths and Facts: Suicide in adolescents*; *Protective Factors: Boosting resiliency in youths*; and *The Laramie Schools – Youth Alternatives Partnership* for youth services providers, student services personnel, school board members, education policymakers, community prevention coalitions, law enforcement officers, and juvenile justice personnel.

In addition, Dr. Poland and Dr. Genevieve LaFleur the Post Doctoral Resident in the Office of Suicide and Violence Prevention in 2011-12 recently wrote the Op-Ed for both the print and online edition of Education Week News October 24, 2012. The Op-Ed was entitled, "Schools can make the difference in suicide prevention and provided incidence figures for youth suicide" and outlined the important preventative role that schools can play in preventing youth suicide. A link to the Op-Ed appears below:

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=X&q=http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/10/>



Melissa Jackson

Graduate Volunteer

Melissa Jackson is a first year Clinical Psychology (Psy.D) student at the Center for Psychological Studies and is concentrating in forensic psychology. Originally from Virginia Beach, VA she has always had an interest in the criminal justice field but found her true passion for psychology after the loss of her father to suicide in 2010. She hopes to help the Office of Suicide Prevention in spreading the word about the warning signs of suicide and the importance of being educated about such a growing problem among our society. Along with being involved with SVP, she is also the first year representative for the Student Organization for the Advocacy of Psychology and enjoys lobbying for mental health issues.



Oren Schwartz

Graduate Assistant

Hi! I am a third year PsyD student at NSU. This is my second year as the Graduate Assistant for SVP. Last year, we worked on raising awareness of our office at NSU and suicide prevention efforts across the country. This year, we hope to replicate those results and continue to reach out to the students, staff, and faculty of NSU. We have increased the presentations we offer to include preventative measures such as stress management and test-taking anxiety. We welcome you to visit our website and request a presentation for your class, department, club, or any other group at NSU. I look forward to seeing you!

Current News: New National Strategy Looks to Reduce Suicide Deaths

On September 10th, the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention released a strategy to reduce the number of suicide deaths. Two years prior, Secretary Kathleen Sebelius of Health and Human Services and former Secretary Robert Gates created this Action Alliance. This national strategy details 13 goals and 60 objectives for decreasing suicide over the next decade.

The four immediate priorities involve:

1. Integrating suicide prevention into health care
2. Encouraging the transformation of health care systems to prevent suicide
3. Changing the ways the public talks about suicide and suicide prevention
4. Improving data collection on suicidal behaviors to support more effective prevention methods

Secretary Sebelius also announced a promising grant package of almost 56 million dollars for community suicide prevention programs. There has also been a huge push to help prevent suicide among veterans and military members. The Department of Veterans Affairs is also hiring over a thousand new mental health professionals. Suicide prevention is growing as it is now the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and more servicemen are dying by suicide than in combat.

Upcoming Events in Suicide Prevention:

Power Over Pain Walk: February 9, 2013

The walk was created as a forum to raise funds and awareness for people who suffer from chronic pain. It takes place on the NSU campus.

Triangle of Care Conference: April 27, 2013

The Triangle of Care Conference takes place in the Health Professionals Division of NSU. It offers suicide prevention educational opportunities for the Florida Tri-County area. Presenters in the past have included Dr. Poland and Dr. Flemons from SVP as well as other NSU faculty.

American Association of Suicidology Annual Conference: April 24-27th in Austin Texas

The title for this year's AAS conference is, "Challenging Our Assumptions." SVP has submitted a presentation entitled, "Moving Forward Together to Understand and Prevent Global Bullycide."

REQUEST A SVP PRESENTATION!

To date SVP has provided **267** presentations to various departments of NSU. SVP has presented to over **5,800** faculty, staff and students of NSU. Presentation topics include suicide and violence training, stress management, and test taking anxiety. Use the link below to request a presentation!

http://nova.edu/suicideprevention/presentation_requests.html

Campus News: AFSP's Out of Darkness Walk

What is the Out of Darkness Campus Walk?

The *Out of the Darkness Campus* walk is a 3-5 mile walk taking place in 200 communities across the country, with the proceeds benefitting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). In deciding to walk you are taking us a step closer to making suicide prevention a national priority. The walk involves thousands of students nationwide that raise money for AFSP's vital research and education programs to prevent suicide and save lives, increase national awareness about depression and suicide and provide support for survivors of suicide loss. By walking, you will have helped to support the following initiatives:

- Interactive Screening Program that screens college students for depression online and connects them directly to the campus counseling center.
- AFSP's new educational film for high school students to teach students, teachers, guidance counselors and other school personnel about suicide prevention. See *The Truth about Suicide* below.
- Film on physician depression and suicide to educate physicians and medical students to recognize depression in themselves and their patients.

How did the walks get started?

- In 1987, a number of leading experts on suicide, business and community leaders, and survivors of suicide formed the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention or AFSP, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. They believed that only a combined effort would make it possible to fund the research necessary for progress in the prevention of suicide. Such an approach has proven successful with heart disease, cancer and diabetes and it was hoped that it would be successful in dealing with depression and suicide. Many of these individuals were concerned about the alarming rise in youth suicide over the past forty years. During this period, the suicide of young men had tripled and suicide of young women had doubled. Before AFSP was formed, there was no national not-for-profit organization dedicated to funding the research and education programs necessary to prevent suicide. Now the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is the leading national not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research, education and advocacy, and to reaching out to people with mental disorders and those impacted by suicide. To learn more about AFSP and suicide prevention, please visit www.afsp.org
- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) has developed *The Truth about Suicide: Real Stories of Depression in College* to support colleges and universities in implementing suicide prevention activities and services. The aim of this 27-minute film is to present a recognizable picture of depression and other problems associated with suicide, as they are commonly experienced by college students and other young adults. Filming took place on a number of different campuses and other locations, focusing on people who have been personally touched by student depression and suicide.

How do you Remember the Warning Signs of Suicide?
Here's an Easy-to-Remember Mnemonic:

IS PATH WARM?

I	Ideation
S	Substance Abuse
P	Purposelessness
A	Anxiety
T	Trapped
H	Hopelessness
W	Withdrawal
A	Anger
R	Recklessness
M	Mood Change



If you or someone you know is in a crisis, do not wait to seek help! Call 9-1-1 and seek out additional help from resources on this page.

Suicide Prevention Resources

1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

The Ganley Foundation
<http://ganleyfoundation.org/>

The Trevor Project
<http://www.thetrevorproject.org>

American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org/

American Association for Suicide Prevention
www.afsp.org

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org

Florida Office of Suicide Prevention
www.helppromotehope.com

Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention
www.fisponline.com

Mobile Crisis Response Teams

Broward - Henderson:

954-463-0911

Palm Beach:

North: 561-383-5777

South: 561-637-2102

Miami-Dade - Miami Behavioral:

305-774-3627

Henderson Student Counseling

Student counseling provides the opportunity for students to benefit from working on personal issues with experienced professionals.

The counseling center is staffed by licensed mental health professionals, a licensed psychologist, and a psychiatrist
3538 S. University Drive Davie, FL 33328
Located at the University Park Plaza
(Just east of the NSU Bookstore)

Phone (954) 424-6911 Fax: (954) 424-6915

Hours of Operation

Monday..... 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Tuesday..... 9:00 am - 8:00 pm
Wednesday..... 9:00 am - 8:00 pm
Thursday9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Friday9:00 am - 5:00 pm