

Postvention Support after a Suicide: *Lessons Learned from Schools and Communities*

2016 Beyond the Basics Conference

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Lowell Libby

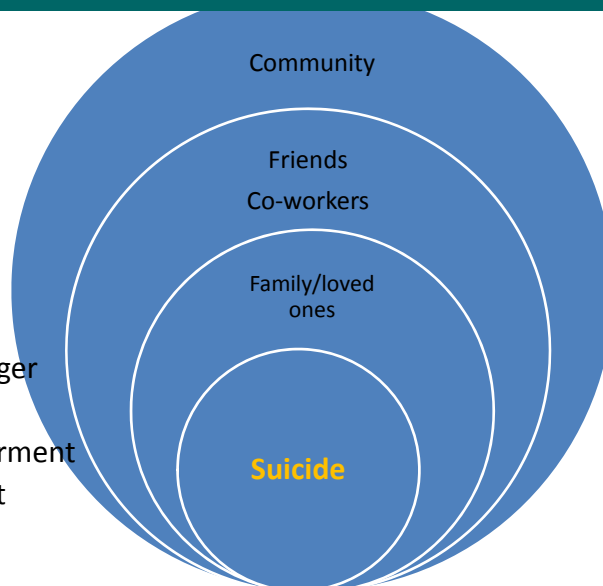
Eric Johnson

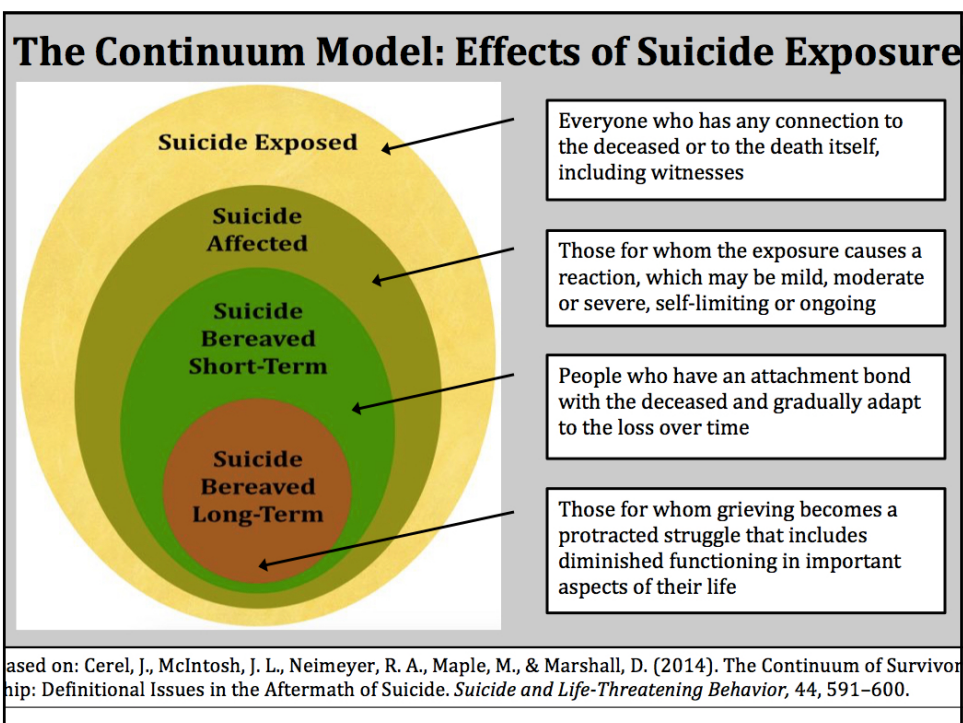
Ben Milster



Effects of Suicide

- The Loss is:
 - Sudden
 - Unexpected
 - Premature
 - Self-inflicted
- The Reaction is:
 - Shock, hurt, anger
 - Loss and grief
 - Questions & torment
 - Guilt and regret





Suicide Postvention

- **Postvention:** A planned intervention with those affected by a suicide death to help facilitate the grieving process (Schneidman, 1972).
- *Most of the research and initial efforts have been directed for school communities.*
- *The needs are similar for other settings.*
- ***Suicide Postvention IS suicide prevention for the next generation.***

The Major Goals of a Postvention Response

- 1. To stabilize the community and to help individuals at all levels of the organization (and related family/community) to cope with the trauma and grief.
- 2. To address the risk of contagion; to prevent further suicides.
- 3. To help the organization return to normalcy and the pursuit of its mission.

Postvention Goals: Organizational, Group and Individual

- **Organization Level:** To help restore equilibrium and normal functioning.
- **Group Level:** To promote healthy grieving and to appropriately commemorate the deceased.
- **Individual Level:**
 - To identify and provide support for those most distressed,
 - To minimize adverse personal outcomes (depression, PTSD...)
 - To reduce the risk for contagion/ to prevent suicide

Identify Those Most in Need of Support

- Family members and close friends of the deceased,
- Those who worked professionally most closely with the deceased,
- Those people already at increased risk (depressed, self-injurious, suicidal history, trauma history...)
- Those who have had other significant losses and are retriggered,
- Those who may feel responsible for the death,

Immediate Response: Stabilize the Community

1. Get the Story; Confirm the facts
2. Pull together a core crisis response team (internal and external)
3. Communicate with staff & plan for communication with clients/students/community
4. Identify impacted/vulnerable individuals
5. Support the grief reactions of affected people
6. Debrief for most impacted individuals/staff

Immediate Response: Stabilize the Community

7. Support commemoration of the deceased
8. Provide education on grief and stress response, depression...
9. Refer as needed to appropriate resources:
 1. Grief counseling
 2. Survivor support groups
 3. Employee Assistance Program
 4. Online survivor resources
 5. NAMI Maine
 6.

Suicide Grief Does Not Recognize Geography

- Those affected by a suicide loss define themselves;
- Social media connections mean that traditional boundaries of school districts, communities or others are much less meaningful.
 - Virtual connections
 - Social circles
 - Affiliation
- Be aware of the impact of social media messaging, especially on youth.
- Celebrity suicides cast a large shadow

Multiple Losses Increase Contagion Risk

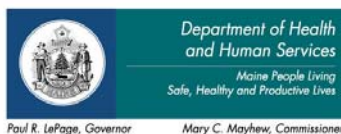
- More than one death in a program/school
- Multiple losses or attempts across a geographic area
- Multiple losses within an individual's life(over time)
- High visibility celebrity suicide (eg. Robin Williams)

Resources Available to help

- **Maine Regional Crisis Teams: 1-888-568-1112**
 - Phone consultation re needs,
 - Clinicians onsite to support affected people
 - Assessing risk of contagion
- **Center for Grieving Children:** (Cumberland and York Counties)
- **Maine Suicide Prevention Program**
 - **Resource list of Grief Supports**
- **Community resources:**
 - Hospice programs,
 - therapists,
 - clergy,
 - Camp Kita:
 - Others....

Resources Available to help

- “I’ve Lost a Loved one to Suicide; What do I do Now?”
 - A MSPP Resource booklet for new survivors of suicide loss.
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
 - Support Groups, Resources and Literature
 - <http://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone/resources-loss-survivors/>
- After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools
 - <http://afsp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/toolkit.pdf>
- Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on College Campuses
 - http://hemha.org/postvention_guide.pdf
- A Manager’s Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace
 - <http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/sites/actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/files/Managers-Guidebook-To-Suicide-Postvention-Web.pdf>



Paul R. LePage, Governor

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner