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Alive and Kicking Goals!



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Alive and Kicking Goals is a grass roots, innovative initiative to educate, inspire and model to young people in Kimberley communities, of Western Australia, alternatives to suicide by helping them create a future of hope through positive relationships and life choices.

Sadly, the impetus for this program was the loss of sixteen Aboriginal young people in a six month period in 2008, some of which were the family and friends of the Alive and Kicking Goals peer educators. It was this waste of young, vibrant lives that led to the Broome Saints Football Club thinking outside the square as to how to help stop young people literally dying every fortnight. Traditional mental health approaches weren't having an impact on the endemic statistics for the region, what was needed was a local solution to a local problem.

The purpose of the program is to educate young Aboriginal people using peer mentors, about issues such as suicide, self harm, drug and alcohol abuse, using the unique vehicle of Australian Rules Football. Up to fifteen young peer educators meet weekly after football training to discuss suicide, self harm and their plans and dreams for Alive and Kicking Goals. All volunteer their time, often after hours or during weekends to attend professional development workshops with the hope their new skills can help save someone's life or assist someone in their hour of need. It is highly commendable, given these young men often have competing priorities, such as girls, families and fishing!

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What's inspirational about this program is that these young men are standing up, often in traditional communities saying enough is enough! It is not an easy task for Aboriginal young men to take a stand against something like suicide, where it is not "culturally appropriate" to speak about such things, but admirably these young men believe in their own leaderships and continue to aspire to keep people alive.

So, what drives these young men to help shape their own destinies and those of their communities?

It is their desire to challenge the statistics, who are their family, their friends, their community, their culture, as well as their willingness to share their stories of loss with others with the hope that they can prevent suicide and create open dialogue for more discussion.

In addition and importantly, it is providing a healthy pathway to healing for themselves and their communities.



The IASP Website has updated the postvention and suicide bereavement pages. Please look at these links:

- <http://www.iasp.info/resources/postvention/>
- <http://www.iasp.info/postvention.php>

Do you know any additional useful resources (e.g., PDF of brochures or links) or links to national suicide survivor organisations?

If so, please forward same to **karl.andriessen@pandora.be**

13th European Symposium on Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour (ESSSB) 1—4 September 2010

The following is an overview of the Plenary and Symposia due to take place at the 13th ESSSB Conference this September in Rome.

Plenary:

Psycho-Social Aspects of Suicide Bereavement

John R. Jordan, Ph.D.

Summary

It seems obvious that social support is an important part of the healing process after bereavement for most people. This may be particularly true after traumatic deaths that are stigmatizing and isolating, such as the suicide of a loved one. The support may be informal, from family members and friends, or from more formal resources such as bereavement support groups or grief therapists. But why is this experience of contact with caring and compassionate “others” helpful? Perhaps surprisingly, there has been very little theoretical work done to understand this process. In this brief presentation, I hope to link the crucial role of social support after suicide bereavement to recent research and theory about attachment, trauma, and bereavement.

Symposia:

New directions in suicide survivor research:

Symposium 1 of IASP Taskforce on Postvention and Suicide Bereavement

Chairs:

Karl Andriessen, Onja Grad

Presenters:

John R. Jordan, Dolores Angela Castelli Dransart, Onja Grad, Anka Zavasnik, K. Dyregrov.

The symposium consists of four presentations from international distinguished researchers. The first presenter will address the advantages and the pitfalls of collaboration between researchers, clinicians and survivors in order to improve survivor research and support. The second presentation concerns a study on the pathways of recovery of suicide survivors and the place of professional support in recovering after suicide. The third presentation deals with the under researched topic of gender differences in suicide bereavement and recovery. And the fourth study presents novel findings of how suicide survivors experienced research participation.

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New forms of support for suicide survivors:

Symposium 2 of IASP Taskforce on Postvention and Suicide Bereavement

Chairs:

John (Jack) Jordan, Karl Andriessen, Sean McCarthy

Presenters:

Paul Kelly, Sally Spencer Thomas, Karl Andriessen, Karolina Kysinska, Jack R. Jordan

Traditionally, people bereaved by suicide find support in their social network, via grief counselling, or via support groups. This symposium intends to look beyond these traditional support resources, and will explore newly emerging forms of support for people bereaved by suicide. The first presenter will set the scene by addressing the needs of suicide survivors and their natural coping mechanisms. The second presenter will highlight the under researched aspect of spirituality in suicide bereavement and the potentially valuable roles of faith communities in survivor support. The third presentation concerns a study of online resources for suicide survivors. This pioneer study looks at the availability and the quality of online resources. Based on an overview of existing services and the historical development of survivor support, the fourth presenter will present newly emerging formats of survivor support, and the challenges and potential benefits of these evolutions.

New Publications

Milton, Carol Anne (2009)

Story of a mother's loss of her son through suicide.

Veritas Publications. ISBN: 978 1 84730 202 1

De Leo, Diego

Turning Points: An Extraordinary Journey into the Suicidal Mind

Australian Academic Press. ISBN: 9781921513374

Linn-Gust, Michelle (2010)

Rocky Roads: The Journeys of Families through Suicide Grief

Chellehead Works. ISBN: 9780972331814

Australia Develops Suicide Bereavement Support Group Standards & Guidelines

**Susan Beaton,
Lifeline Australia**

In an international first, Lifeline Australia and collaborative partners have developed and produced national 'Standards and Guidelines' to inform Suicide Bereavement Support Groups of best practice. These 'Standards & Guidelines' have recently been accepted onto the SPRC/AFSP Best Practices Registry for Suicide Prevention, under Section II – Expert and Consensus Statements. Funded by the Australian Government's Department of Health & Ageing (2007-2009) the Standards were developed as part of a larger project relating to the practice, training and operation of Suicide Bereavement Support Groups (SBSG).

A component of any coordinated "whole of community" approach to postvention includes the provision of suicide bereavement support groups. The sixth Action Area under Australia's National Suicide Prevention Strategy Framework is *Implementing standards and quality in suicide prevention*. As such, the SBSG Standards & Practice project undertook to investigate and reflect on the evidence of what works with support groups and develop tools to support best practice.

Currently across Australia, there exists a diverse range of suicide bereavement support groups (SBSG) providing much needed support to those bereaved by suicide. These groups provide invaluable support to people experiencing this most tragic loss by providing a safe and comfortable place to make connections with others who have shared a similar experience. Edwin Shneidman (1972, p. x) described postvention as "*prevention... for the next generation*" and as such, support groups can be an effective means of reducing the impact of grief complications, suicidality and enhancing psychological wellbeing.

Before this project there were no minimal national standards or benchmarks available against which groups could guide their development or gauge how well they were performing and few accredited training tools that facilitators could obtain to assist them in running SBSGs. Grief is a uniquely individual experience and not all people bereaved by suicide would seek to attend a support group or find a support group suitable to their needs. However, a caring community should make such a group available for those who choose to attend and ensure that the group is guided by standards and best practice and run by trained facilitators.

Lifeline Australia and a consortium of collaborative partners undertook this project to address the shortfall in best practice guidelines by comprehensively reviewing the fabric of SBSG provision in order to fully appreciate current practices and the topography of the SBSG landscape. A broad consultation strategy was implemented to invite input from suicide bereaved, SBSG facilitators currently running groups and suicide bereavement service providers across Australia. An expert reference group closely guided the development phase of the project. The review led to the creation of clearly defined Standards & Guidelines which organisations providing SBSGs can use to support their group's development, measure themselves against, and assist them to evaluate their own performance and effectiveness.

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These Standards informed the development of both a best practice handbook and a suite of training tools to assist in both the facilitation of individual SBSGs and the training of those who facilitate them. The effectiveness of these newly developed standards and tools was tested in a series of eight trial groups undertaken across Australia during 2008, throughout which time a comprehensive external evaluation was carried out.

The project had a workforce development focus and aimed to provide training and support materials for facilitators with a view to improving the level of effectiveness they are able to deliver and the quality of care provided to those who attend SBSGs.

Objective One – Standards & Guidelines

The Standards and Guidelines consist of four major Standards articulated below, each has various sub sections which delineate further detail:

1. Support group establishment & maintenance
2. Support group philosophy and processes
3. Support group facilitation & management
4. Support group services

This set of Standards and Guidelines was developed to support those who participate in and those who operate Suicide Bereavement Support Groups and have been disseminated broadly with rationale and encouragement to adopt this voluntary code of conduct.

Objective Two – Develop a Best Practice Handbook

A literature review was undertaken at the outset of the project alongside a review of the practice evidence derived from experienced SBSG facilitators both nationally and internationally. A comprehensive Practice Handbook was developed to provide a resource for facilitators to enable more effective facilitation in the provision of SBSGs.

Objective Three – Develop Training Tools

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) is the national set of standards which assures nationally consistent, high-quality training and assessment services for clients of Australia's vocational education and training system (VET). For sustainability and credibility reasons, this project undertook to develop Suicide Bereavement Support Group Facilitator training mapped to nationally accredited competencies under the AQTF. The project developed two new competencies to support the training of SBSG facilitators, and used two other already existing competencies to guide the development and mapping of training. A diverse, collaborative group of highly skilled, knowledgeable and experienced trainers came together to develop and present the 3.5 day intensive experiential residential training and assessment tasks based on these competencies. Facilitators completed pre-reading as well as pre and post-training tasks. Trainees also completed the two-day LivingWorks ASIST to ensure their suicide first aid preparedness and duty of care for participants.

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Objective Four – Provide facilitator training and run trial SBSGs

Each Lifeline Centre team of three facilitators was trained and then conducted a trial SBSG guided by the Standards, Guidelines, Practice Handbook and training. Facilitators were supported by centralized (quality assured) external group supervision (via telephone) after each SBSG meeting and met in teleconference with all other trial facilitators in monthly “Update and Practice Issues” forums throughout the trial. SBSG trials were conducted in a range of geographic locations at eight Lifeline Centres across Australia with varying numbers of participants.

Objective Five – External Evaluation

External evaluation was a requirement of this Commonwealth project and the evaluators worked with the project from the outset to be able to provide cumulative feedback to inform the project at every step. The evaluators used a variety of methodologies and provided invaluable objective feedback and observations.

Next Steps for the Standards, Guidelines and Facilitator Practice Handbook

An implementation plan is underway to disseminate the Standards & Guidelines and Facilitator Practice Handbook to those involved with the delivery of Suicide Bereavement Support Groups. It is planned that Facilitator training will be further refined and able to be tailored for novice facilitators and more experienced facilitators. SBSG facilitators often operate in isolation and this project has illuminated the value of creating a community of practice for facilitators to be able to network regularly, to share ideas and challenges and be supported by the materials that have been developed under this project and therefore enhance their skills and knowledge to be able to support those bereaved by suicide.

This project is an international first and provides leadership, direction and support for this vital part of the suicide bereavement support continuum. One of the unique features of the project was the combination of locally developed practice wisdom from Lifeline Centres and other currently operating SBSGs being drawn into and supplemented by research and evidence knowledge to create a rich and practical best practice approach to suicide bereavement support groups. This project has demonstrated the value of building on local service initiatives, and the insights of community carers in suicide prevention, while also introducing the rigour of evidence based service development to create a national model for support groups that will support improved outcomes for people bereaved by suicide.



Upcoming Events:

1-4 September 2010

13th European Symposium on Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour, Rome Italy

10 September 2010

Console Annual Conference, Dublin Castle, Dublin, Ireland

Keynote Speakers: Dr. Jack Jordan, Prof. Onja Grad

10 September 2010

World Suicide Prevention Day. Many faces, many places: Suicide Prevention Across the World

17-20 September 2010

4th IASP Asia Pacific Regional Conference, Brisbane, Australia

Suicide Prevention: A Dialogue Across Disciplines and Cultures

13-19th September 2011

XXVI IASP World Congress, Beijing, China

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