



The Bridge

A Pathway of Hope, Knowledge, Awareness, and Empowerment

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Greetings Letter from the President

Greetings to all!

As we begin this new year, we pray it is a year in which we will move forward to end suicide. We look to a time when we will see the stigma of talking about our mental health issues end and when we will not be afraid of starting the conversation or asking the question: "Are you having thoughts of ending your life?" When we end suicide, we will rest.

My heart aches to see so many ending their lives. I can feel their despair. My heart also breaks for those who have lost loved ones to suicide. It is a life changing and painful journey. It is a day-by-day journey of regaining hope and coping, learning to cope.

It is knowing we will never have the opportunity to start that conversation. We will never have the opportunity to listen to their despair and lack of hope. We will never have the opportunity to open up a different perspective to them. We will never have those moments again.

We have opportunities now. We have opportunities to save lives and make a difference. This is what fuels our fire.

Mississippi Alliance to End Suicide wants you and our communities to know we are part of you.

Every life you and I touch is an opportunity to inspire hope. We were made as masterpieces and meant to collaborate with each other. No one man or woman can effectively change the world; it takes a community of partners, advocates, families, and so many others to make change. A ripple effect of change can begin with YOU.

We are, and you are, peer advocates. It will be you, your sister, your brother, your father, your mother, your pastor, your child's teacher, your friend, your neighbor who open up the conversation and listen attentively. You, as a peer advocate, will be the first one on the scene. You will be the first one to know the signs, to see a change in behavior, and to take them to the next level of care.

It is my hope that through this knowledge you will feel empowered as a peer advocate. As you read our newsletter you will add knowledge to fuel YOUR fire. As you read current media topics on suicide, as you read informative articles, and as you read tips on making a difference or starting a conversation you will be empowered to not be afraid of addressing suicide or saying the word *suicide*. Knowing how to approach suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention topics will make you stronger.

We are part of your community, and we will join you in making change and offering knowledge to move this forward. Our calling is to know when and how to reach out to the broken, whether it be a broken child or a broken grandfather. When you move past fear, you can recognize brokenness and offer opportunity.

It is my sincere hope that you will join our communities of hope and empowerment. It is my hope that through knowledge you are empowered to end suicide.

To His Glory,
Vickie Winslett, President
Mississippi Alliance to End Suicide



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Mission:

We exist to be proactive in the fight to end suicide by providing assistance and networking throughout the continuum of prevention, intervention and postvention. We feel called to undertake this challenge and we will accomplish this with partners who share our vision and passion for helping to end these preventable deaths and the striking pain they leave behind.

Contact Us:

Telephone 601-573-4195

115 Homestead Drive

Madison, MS 39110

Web Site

Endingsuicides.org

Email

mates@endingsuicides.org

**National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-8255

Why? by Dr. Kristen Jones

“The love of the self is the love of God.” - Richard Roar

Researchers have been studying the mind set of suicidal people for decades, and what they have found difficult is that there really is no way to study the mind of someone who commits suicide. We are left with our assumptions of what happened and occasionally with notes that are left behind. This limits what we know about the suicidal state of mind because the state of mind they are in when writing the note does not come close to describing the essence of their thoughts and feelings. As researchers, our need to explain behavior is so burdensome that we lose sight of the severity of feelings. Suicide is sad and sadness feels overwhelming; it's unpleasant. No one really likes to feel or sit with sadness. In an effort to alleviate sadness, we explain. We explain it away by analyzing the data and saying things like, “Maybe Kate Spade wasn't medicated; was Anthony Bourdain ever treated for depression?” As if somehow, these explanations alleviate the sadness that we feel. It is a natural way for our brains to box in the unexplainable. Sadness and the unknown can be scary. What if the feelings of sadness never leave or never get easier? How can anyone wrap their mind around the fact that someone could feel so overwhelmingly sad that they take their life? It's hard to imagine someone being so anxious, so depressed, so hopeless, so sad, that the only answer that made the heaviness of those feelings better was death.

In human nature our brains need a reason, it needs a “why,” to make the sadness feel better. There are a myriad of reasons and disorders that contribute to suicide. We know anxiety and depression are present in everyone who successfully completes suicide. We know that living in a country where one's best is never good enough can leave them feeling empty and contribute to feelings of anxiety

and depression. We know that suicidal people feel like they never truly have a place to belong or be known, leaving them with an overwhelming sense of loneliness. We know that suicidal people have a sense of self-loathing that runs so deep, it's in their cells. This concept of self-loathing is deeper than hating oneself. It is NOT “I hate that behavior or decision.” It's turning that hate inward so much so that it becomes who one is. This self-loathing feels empty, worthless, and shameful. This is one of reasons adolescents are so vulnerable to suicide. They do not have strong brain connections to the frontal lobe to think rationally to love the core of who they are, while the world and peers and standards are screaming at them “you'll never be worthy of love.” Teens are already in a vulnerable state of mind because hormones are

Suicide is not about wanting to die but about not knowing how to live.

flooding the connection to the frontal lobe which inhibits the ability to rationalize and think objectively. This causes every behavior, thought, and feeling to feel bigger and harder. High school can exacerbate these feelings, making everything feel harder. Every break up says something about their self-worth, every “joke” makes them feel like something is wrong with who they are at their core. If one has never been depressed or anxious, all this comes across as overdramatic. But it's not that simple. Because of the influx of hormones causing the wiring in their brain to make everything feel

bigger, self-loathing is also bigger. This causes feelings of shame and guilt and never truly belonging, which can ultimately lead to self-loathing. Dr. Michael Miller, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard University, has spent his life studying suicide. Through his research he was able to name a feeling most people can't put words to. This feeling is behind the thought patterns in those who complete suicide. This feeling may explain (for our human brains) the reasoning behind “why” suicidal people feel the way they feel. Dr. Miller named it *cognitive deconstruction*. This is the process where the brain breaks everything down to very low-level, basic elements. For example, the concept of time: to someone who is not suicidal, time is fast; the moments pass quickly, and they can't keep up with everything in their life because time is fleeting. For someone who is suicidal, they cognitively deconstruct time. This means that the present moment—this, right here, right now—feels like it lasts forever; it feels like this present moment will never end. Because suicidal people have an aversive awareness of the future and an overwhelming sense of depression to the past, their narrow window of escape feels like it will never end. This concept has been linked to suicide notes where people say things like “feed the cat, don't forget the electric bill.” The cognitive deconstruction process keeps the focus on concrete thoughts because that is their only escape from the anxiety of the future or overwhelming feelings from the past. This sounds like boredom. It looks like boredom. For someone who is suicidal, it's more than being bored. This cognitive deconstructing concrete thoughts is their ONLY escape from overwhelming feelings.

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Cont. Why?

This is where death becomes appealing: if my only escape from unpleasant, substantial, feelings is right here, right now, and there is a pervasive avoidance to feeling the past and future, then all there is to think about is feeding the cat or escaping the present. Cognitive deconstruction has been observed in almost every suicide note that Dr. Miller and his team analyzed.

Cognitive deconstruction is where death becomes the most appealing answer. If someone who feels suicidal can't process the past or feel anxiety about the future and the here and now will last forever, what other escape is there? There is no clarity of mind to look before or behind death. Suicide is not about wanting to die but about not knowing how to live. "How do I live in the present when it will last forever? I can't live in the past, and I can't feel my anxiety about the future because I don't know how."

The presence of mind and the love of the core of oneself is a journey that

requires knowledge that who they are, on a cellular level, will be ok to feel things. Nothing will happen to the core of them when they begin to have the presence of mind to feel. This is what counseling helps all of us do. Know that who we are will be ok to feel. Feelings don't mean or say anything about who one is, or who God says they are: You are NOT your feelings; you are not your thoughts; you are you, and no thought, no feeling can change that. If you or someone you know has thought that you are worthless or are self loathing, pick up the phone and call us. Call someone who has the presence of mind to process your thoughts and feelings with you.

National Suicide Hotline
is available 24/7!

You are never alone.
Call 1-800-273-8255.
Text 741741.

Dr. Kristen Jones, LPC, DPC, LPC-S, NCC, is a Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor at Cornerstone Counseling. 601-405-7440



Shining Light by Dana Christine Schmidt

Hold on I beg you little girl...
It doesn't matter how old you are, I want
to lift you up off the floor...
I need your help to open the door, Your
life is worth so much more...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
So much love I know you have, Someday
I know you will be glad...
Those who love you won't let go, Our
love for you is not for show...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
I know your pain there is no shame, Our
lives are not just fun and games...
You suffered more than your fair share,
Please remember how much we care...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
For you are special with a loving heart,
Although you feel you are falling apart...
Your light continues to shine so bright,
You are meant to stay and win your
fight...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
Your pain will soon be in the past, Your
life has moved much too fast...
Your future holds so many joys, Please

don't listen to all the noise...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
There is so much I want to say, I know I
said it yesterdays...
You are very loved and special still, This
is how so many of us do feel...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
You lost your way yesterday, That's in
the past as of today...
You tried to leave I know that's true, I
believe you felt so very blue...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
It is not over soon you will see, Your life
is now you're meant to be...
I beg you now please won't you stay, I
love you more than I can say...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
So many need you yes it is true, We can't
imagine our life without you...
The love we feel is very real, You will
recover and you will heal...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
You have so many reasons to live, You
have so much love to give...
The battle you fought for so long, You

can't give up I know you're strong..
Hold on I beg you little girl...
So many love you and need you so, We
refuse to ever let you go...
You are worth more than all the gold, As
your mother I will not fold...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
You almost left your pain was great, You
are still here it's not too late...
You have your children to think of, They
need their mother and her love...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
Take some time and heal your mind,
sooner than later you will find...
That all I say to you is true, you won't
always feel so blue...
Hold on I beg you little girl...
So many need you to stay, As you start a
brand new day...
I am your mother listen as I say, I love
you forever and a day...

November 8, 2016
[http://www.theunbrokensmile.com/
suicide-prevention-poem/](http://www.theunbrokensmile.com/suicide-prevention-poem/)



Your Trusted Servants

President: Vickie Winslett

Vice President: CJ Caufield

Treasurer: Larry Coleman

Board Members:

Johnny Gilmore

Stephanie Raines

Joni Shaw

Cheri Stegall

Social Work Intern: Shannon Corl

Communications: Elizabeth Sikora

2019 Calendar of Events

April-July

Dave's Journey of Hope

500-mile Appalachian Trail Walk for his daughter Kayla and others struggling with losing someone to suicide. Check out his progress on Facebook or www.endingsuicides.org

April 9

Ribbon Cutting; 115 Homestead Dr, Madison; 9:30 am–10:30 am

May 7

Monthly Suicide Loss Survivors Support Group 6:30 pm; For Madison location, please email mates@endingsuicideorg

July

Project Light: Art Auction

Featuring local band **Given Grace;** Vertical Church, Madison; More info to come

September

Lean on Me Music Fest

Featuring local band **Given Grace;** Meridian; More info to come



Please **share your personal stories** of hope, knowledge, awareness, and empowerment. Also let us know **what you would like to see** in upcoming issues. Email to mates@endingsuicides.org

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS:

- ◆ Talks about committing suicide
- ◆ Has trouble eating or sleeping
- ◆ Hopelessness
- ◆ Exhibits drastic changes in behavior
- ◆ Withdrawal/isolation from friends or social activities
- ◆ Loses interest in school, work or hobbies
- ◆ Prepares for death by writing a will and making final arrangements
- ◆ Gives away prized possessions
- ◆ Has attempted suicide before
- ◆ Takes unnecessary risks
- ◆ Recent trauma or life crisis
- ◆ Seems preoccupied with death and dying
- ◆ Loses interest in his or her personal appearance
- ◆ Sudden calmness

KNOW WHERE TO FIND HELP:

I want to commit suicide. I have a plan, and I don't think I can stop myself.

Call 911. Don't worry you will not be arrested. The 911 operator will get you the help you need.

I have no one to talk to about my feelings.

There is someone available to listen 24/7. Call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255**. They also have an online chat open all day, every day. You can also text CONNECT to 741741, and a trained crisis counselor at the **National Suicide Hotline** will text you back, to listen and help create a plan to keep you safe and alive.

I worry that my child may feel suicidal. Where can I find help?

The **Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide** has an excellent online resource for parents who think their child may be at risk. You can also call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255** to find help in your area.



Please mail your **DONATIONS** to
Mississippi Alliance to End Suicide
115 Homestead Drive
Madison, MS 39110

MATES welcomes any donation amount.

MATES is a Non-Profit 501c3 organization that relies on donations to help end suicide in MS and, hopefully, worldwide.