



A COMMITTED GROUP OF CITIZENS EMBRACING LIFE BY BEING A RESOURCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND POSTVENTION

*Est. 2012*

# Juneuly 2020

## E-NEWSLETTER

### Inside This Issue

- ACSPC News
- ...Where Depression, Anxiety and Suicide Run Highest...
- Being Happier will Help You Live Longer, so Learn How to be Happier

### ACSPC NEWS

The hot days of summer have us simmering. The Coalition's committees are on fire as a wide-range of tasks and obstacles are conquered and projects are brainstormed and being planned methodically.

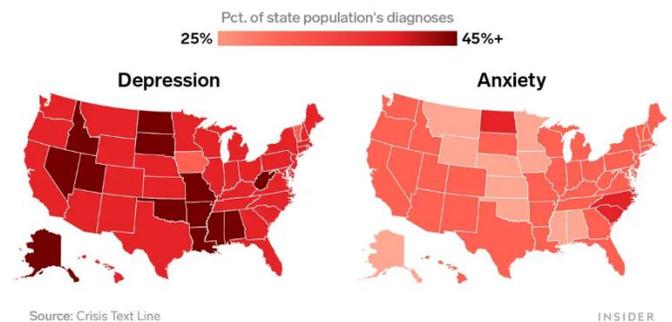
Engagement and live activity are making a return to the Allegany County Suicide Prevention Coalition, and it is for the best. Each committee has laid out the welcome mat for new members. So, if you feel like the time has come to make change, then join us on the Prevention Education Committee, Suicide Response & Postvention Committee, or the Messaging and Awareness Committee. Take a look at the rest of 2020, understanding that dates will change and new events will be presented on the ACSPC Calendar located at <https://ppaccentral.org/suicide-prevention-2/>. A special "Thank you" is extended to Jon Chaffee for making this page and the live calendar at the bottom of the PPAC page possible.

Due to technical glitches, we were unable to have our July meeting, so we hope to see you smiling online in September!

### ...WHERE DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND SUICIDE RUN HIGHEST...

By Shira Feder

#### Mental health diagnoses by state



A data analysis of 129 million messages sent to Crisis Text Line over the course of six years shows which states are most affected by anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide. Counselors for the 24/7 support network field more texts about suicide from people in the Western states of Colorado, Idaho, and Utah than anywhere else. People from the South more often send texts about depression. Anxiety rates are particularly high on the coasts, and in both Dakotas.

## **Depression rates are high nationwide, but some parts of the country see higher rates of suicide, anxiety and self-harm**

North Dakota had the highest rates of texters writing about depression, as well as anxiety and stress. Many southern states, including Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, had higher rates of depression than other areas.

In 44 states, at least 20% of texters reported feelings of isolation, while Montana saw the highest rate (15%) of texters writing about feelings of self-harm. People on the coasts reported the highest rates of anxiety.

People in mountain states like Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming, had the highest rates of texters writing about thoughts of suicide.

In Puerto Rico, [an unincorporated territory of the US] and Rhode Island, a majority of texters (40%) texted about relationship stress, while Hawaii, California, and New Jersey had the highest rates of texters worried about school stress, with over 30% of texters writing to talk about it.

## **A high volume of texts come from young people in rural areas with the least access to mental health treatments**

“There has been a correlation in rural places with less mental healthcare and increased mental health issues,” said Bob Filbin, Crisis Text Line’s Chief Data Scientist.

A fifth of Crisis Text Line’s texts come from some of the lowest-income zip codes. One in 10 come from rural American counties in states like Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Virginia, which have the least access to mental health treatments for children. Some 56% of people texting the app said it was their first time trying to get any kind of care.



Most suicides happen without precedent, making it exceedingly hard to prevent. But, Filbin says, “by analyzing Crisis Text Line’s data their team hopes to

spot patterns early. We can find patterns that allow us to actually detect suicidal risk and try to get ahead of it. We can find regional trends that require attention.”

## **Many texters are women, LGBTQ youth, and people of color**

Close to half (44%) of the texters define as LGBTQ, which should not come as a surprise according to Filbin. Data from the US Office of Disease Prevention show LGBTQ youth in the US are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than teens who identify as heterosexual.

The suicide rate for children has been dropping, but LGBTQ youth still have higher rates of suicidal ideation or attempts than heterosexual children.



Though a majority of texters are white (69.5%), a significant proportion are Hispanic (19%) and African American (13%) – groups that are less likely to have good access to mental health care. One survey showed 48% of whites received mental health services, compared to 31% of Black and Hispanic people. Barriers to care include mental illness stigma in minority populations, distrust in the healthcare system, and lack of culturally competent doctors.

Although Alaska natives and American Indians together represent about 1.7% of the US population, on Crisis Text Line they represent 5.5% of the total texters. Filbin says there are two key factors here: “One, that they’re one of the highest risk populations [for mental health conditions], and two, that access to services for them is largely unavailable.

“The vast majority of texts – 79.5% – come from women, who tend to be more proactive about seeking support than men,” said Ashley Womble, head of communications for Crisis Text Line. “The data shows that women tend to be more likely to reach out for support across the board, especially when it comes to

mental health support, even though we know that men are more likely to have a suicide attempt.” Find the article [here](#).

## **BEING HAPPIER WILL HELP YOU LIVE LONGER, SO LEARN HOW TO BE HAPPIER**

By Sandee LaMotte, CNN

If you could wish for just one thing, would it be happiness or a long life? Given what researchers tell us, one is likely to produce the other.

Science has been exploring the connection between happiness and longevity for some time. A 2011 analysis of nearly 4,000 Brits found those who said they felt content, happy or excited on a typical day were up to 35% less likely to die prematurely. In a 2016 study, a positive outlook was associated with longer life for nearly 4,000 older French men and women studied over 22 years.

Researchers followed more than 2,000 Mexican-Americans in 2015 and found those who were more positive in their world view were half as likely to die. And a 2011 study followed around 200 women and men from San Francisco over 13 years and found those who reported more positive than negative experiences also lived longer.



According to research on the Positive Psychology Center website, striving for well-being will allow you to perform better at work, have better relationships, a stronger immune system, fewer sleep problems, lower levels of burnout, better physical health and -- you'll live longer.

Great! But how do you obtain happiness? That's the tough question, especially since the meaning of the word isn't even scientifically agreed upon.

"Happiness comes in different sizes and flavors," said cardiologist Dr. Alan Rozanski, a professor of medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai who studies optimism.

"There is the transient type, fed by such things as a walk in a park, spending time with a friend, or eating that ice cream you love," he continued. "But these feelings of happiness come and go."

What creates a sustained feeling of happiness, say experts, is a mixture of traits like optimism and resilience, fed by behaviors such as expressing gratitude, forgiveness and being kind to others, all held together by a strong sense of purpose.

Add to that mix one master ingredient: a sense of community characterized by warm, supportive, satisfying relationships with others.

Now that we have something of a working recipe for happiness, let's find the ingredients.

### **Satisfying social connections**

"People who are more socially connected to family, to friends, to community, are happier, they're physically healthier, and they live longer than people who are less well connected," said Harvard psychiatrist Robert Waldinger in his popular TEDx talk. "And the experience of loneliness turns out to be toxic."

Waldinger is the fourth director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which followed the lives of 724 Boston men for more than 75 years and then began following more than 2,000 of their offspring and their wives.

Among the original recruits in the study were President John F. Kennedy and longtime Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee.

The unprecedented study has allowed researchers to get closer to determining the main characteristics of a happy life.

"The lessons aren't about wealth or fame or working harder and harder," Waldinger said. "The clearest message that we get from this 75-year study is this: Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period."

You don't have to have dozens of friends or even be in a committed relationship, he stresses.

"It's the quality of your close relationships that matters," Waldinger said. "High-conflict marriages, for example, without much affection, turn out to be very bad for our health, perhaps worse than getting divorced. And living in the midst of good, warm relationships is protective."

### **Looking on the bright side**

Optimism and pessimism are the yin and yang of happiness. Optimists are people who expect good things to happen to them, while pessimists expect bad things to happen.

It turns out that looking on the bright side of life is really good for your health. Research has found a direct link between optimism and a stronger immune system, better lung function and cardiac health.

A recent meta-analysis of studies found that compared to pessimists, an optimist had about a 35% lower risk of major heart complications, such as a cardiac death, stroke or a heart attack.

"In fact, the more positive the person, the greater the protection from heart attacks, stroke and any cause of death," said Mt. Sinai's Rozanski, who was the lead author on the study.

There are a lot of reasons why a positive outlook might improve your physical health and help you live longer. It reduces the stress hormone cortisol, which controls inflammation, blood sugar and blood pressure levels, all key factors in disease development.

Optimists also have better health habits. They're more likely to exercise, have better diets and are less likely to smoke.

"Optimists also tend to have better coping skills and are better problem-solvers," Rozanski said. "They are better at what we call proactive coping, or anticipating problems and then proactively taking steps to fix them."

Whatever the reasons, a 2019 study of nearly 6,000 people from Harvard's Health and Retirement study found optimists had a 24% increased likelihood of maintaining healthy aging.

### **Meaning and purpose**

A sense of purpose and meaning in your life is a big part of living a longer, happier life, according to psychology professor Lyle Ungar, who has developed what he calls the Well-Being Map. It rates every US county on such psychological factors as openness, trust, agreeableness and neuroticism.

"Do you have a job or a calling that makes some sense?" Ungar asked in an interview with CNN last year. "The way to happiness is not by choosing to be happy, it's to find meaning in life. Go volunteer, spend time at a charity, give something of yourself. The people who are doing fine in that way are living longer."

Lord Richard Layard, one of Britain's most prominent economists and the author of several books on happiness, also believes that to make ourselves happy we should focus on the well-being of others.

"A society cannot flourish without some sense of shared purpose," he writes in his landmark book, "Happiness: Lessons From a New Science."

"If your sole duty is to achieve the best for yourself, life becomes just too stressful, too lonely -- you are set up to fail. Instead, you need to feel you exist for something larger, and that very thought takes off some of the pressure."

### **Spirituality**

Studies by the Pew Research Center show that actively religious people are more likely than less- or non-religious people to describe themselves as "very happy." They also share some traits that could improve their chance at a longer, happy life: They are less likely to smoke and drink, and more likely to join clubs and volunteer at charities.

"I'm surprised how good religion is for people," Ungar said. "Religious people are more agreeable, they're happier, they live longer."

It doesn't have to be a traditional religion. Layard points out that spiritual practices ranging from meditation to positive psychology to cognitive therapy can also feed an inner life.



## Flourishing with PERMA

University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin Seligman, who co-founded the field of positive psychology, has developed a theory he believes will enable well-being, which some experts argue is a better goal than happiness.

Seligman has developed five building blocks toward well-being he calls "PERMA." Each of them stand independently of the others, and should be pursued for "its own sake, not as a means to an end."

"P" stands for positive emotion, which you can cultivate in hope for the future and an appreciation for the past. By practicing gratitude for what you've been given and forgiveness for what you were not, Seligman feels you can create positive emotion about your past. Build hope and optimism, he says, and you build positive emotions about your future.

"E" is for engagement, which he defines as fully using all your skills, strengths and attention on a challenging task. Doing this, he says, will put you in the "flow," sort of a mental version of the athlete's "zone."

"R" is for relationships and the critical importance they have in our lives in amplifying both our positive and negative feelings.

"M" is for meaning, a sense of purpose from being part of something bigger than ourselves. He points to religion, family and social causes such as working for a better environment as ways to increase meaning in our lives. Research shows doing acts of kindness for others can also increase our well-being.

And finally, "A" is for accomplishment. This is not necessarily financial success, but success and mastery of a skill or activity for its own sake.

Or as the Dalai Lama has said: "Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions." Check out the article with hyperlinks [here](#).

## Suicide Prevention

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL

**KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS:**

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself (online or in person)
- Feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge

**ASK QUESTIONS:**

- “Do you ever you think about suicide?”
- “Do you have a plan to hurt or kill yourself?”
- “Have you attempted suicide before?”
- “Have you thought about when you would do it (today, tomorrow, next week)?”
- “Have you thought about what method you would use?”
- “Are you seeing your doctor or mental health professional regularly and often?”

Do's

- ✔ Let the person talk and LISTEN to them without judgement
- ✔ Reassure them that treatment and help is available
- ✔ Tell them what they are experiencing is treatable and that suicidal feelings are temporary

Don'ts

- ✘ Don't try to minimize problems or shame a person into changing their mind
- ✘ Don't try to convince a person who is suicidal that "it's not that bad"
- ✘ Don't preach about suicide being right or wrong

GET HELP! ⚠

A suicidal person should see a doctor or mental health professional immediately.

If the person has a plan to hurt or kill themselves and you fear they are in imminent danger:

- \* Stay with the person
- \* Get them to the nearest Emergency Department

CALL  
9-1-1

\* If you are not with them, keep the conversation going until you can connect them to help:

- o Ask questions about their plan
- o Listen to them
- o Reassure them that you are there for them and will help them find support

CRISIS TEXT LINE | TEXT "HELLO" TO 741741

A 24/7 texting service providing support for those in crisis.

SOCIAL MEDIA

If a friend has posted suicidal content on Facebook, use the safety tool to get them help.

If a friend has posted suicidal content on Twitter, alert Twitter to get them help.

If you feel the person isn't in immediate danger, offer to work together to get help:

- \* Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK

NATIONAL  
SUICIDE  
PREVENTION  
LIFELINE

1-800-273-TALK  
[www.suicideline.org](http://www.suicideline.org)

- \* Help them contact a mental health professional or go along to the first appointment.
- \* If you're in a position to help, don't assume that your persistence is unwanted or intrusive.
- \* Follow-up is important and make a plan to keep connected to the person

Brought to you by:

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION  
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
[www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)

SUICIDE AWARENESS  
MOVES US FORWARD  
[www.save.org](http://www.save.org)