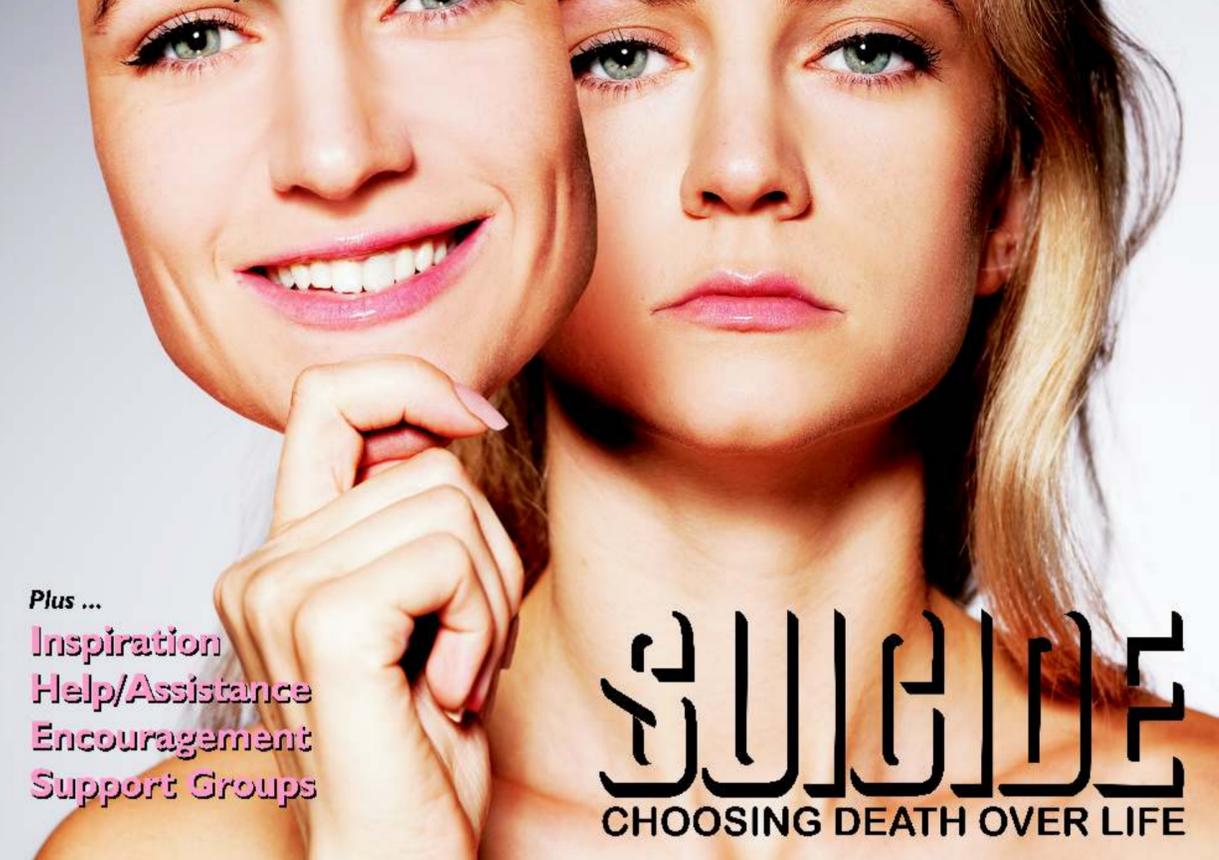
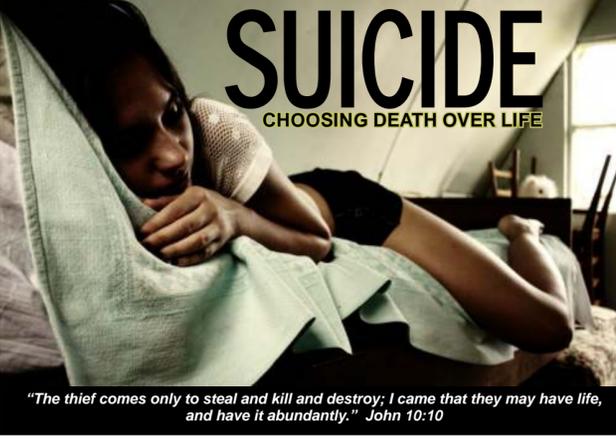


THE CHURCH Guide



Plus ... Inspiration Help/Assistance Encouragement Support Groups

SUICIDE CHOOSING DEATH OVER LIFE



"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Phoebe, a seventh grader, was constantly teased at school. Then the teasing turned into bullying as derogatory remarks were posted on her Facebook page.

Her mother often checked her daughter's Facebook page to make sure there wasn't anything inappropriate being sent or received, and she noticed that Phoebe was getting some threatening messages. Other girls were calling her daughter a slut and a whore.

When she talked to Phoebe about these messages, Phoebe unfriended her so she was no longer able to read her page.

Then one Thursday morning, Phoebe stayed home from school while her parents went to work. The last message she posted on her Facebook page said that she would easily be forgotten, and that she was just a stupid little naive girl that nobody would miss.

When her parents returned home from work that evening, they found that Phoebe had hanged herself. A suicide note said that she couldn't handle what others were saying about her.

28-year-old Army soldier Brandon Barnett showed up at his parents' home after a brutal, year-long deployment in Afghanistan.

His mom and dad thought his Army experience seemed to be helping their son mature. He seemed to be more aggressive and not quite so shy anymore.

Three days later, Brandon drove to a neighboring city where he donned his combat fatigues, boots and helmet. After stopping to purchase some beer, he checked into a hotel and shot himself in the middle of the night.

It seems like everyone these days has been touched by suicide ... a friend, a family member, someone you know at school, a co-worker ... or maybe you've even thought of committing suicide yourself. Others know someone who tried but failed. Some of you reading this, may even be thinking about it right now.

The latest data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that 38,364 suicide deaths were reported in the U.S. in 2010. This latest rise places suicide as the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. This is the highest rate of suicide in 15 years.

Although suicide rates are highest for people between the ages of 40 and 59, our country is seeing a dramatic increase in suicides among teens and members in the military.

The Department of Defense began tracking military suicides in 2001. Last year (2012) they report that 349 service members died by suicide. There were 295 combat related deaths recorded for that same time period, which means that more men and women in the military died by suicide than on the battlefield.

You might think that the continued and repeated deployment of American soldiers would be the most likely reason for this alarming trend, but the fact is the bulk of soldiers committing suicide are those who have never even left American soil, or who are on their first deployment.



Photo: U.S. Army After taking a long hard look at the issue of suicide in the ranks, the Army found out that soldiers who committed suicide generally killed themselves for the same reasons other people in

the civilian population kill themselves. The common threads are alcohol and drug abuse, marital discord, and financial problems.

Thrown in a couple of separations from family and loved ones, and a deployment or two and you have a recipe for disaster.

Suicide has become the third leading cause of death among adolescents and teenagers. In a survey of high school students, the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center found that almost 1 in 5 teens had thought about suicide, about 1 in 6 teens had made plans for suicide, and more than 1 in 12 teens had attempted suicide in the last year.

As Christians, we need to know the warning signs of suicide, and learn how we can help save someone from making a tragic decision.

There are many behavioral indicators that can help parents or friends recognize the threat of suicide in a loved one. Since mental and substance-related disorders so frequently accompany suicidal behavior, many of the cues to be looked for are symptoms associated with such disorders as depression, bipolar disorder (manic depression), anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug use, disruptive behavior disorders, borderline personality disorder, and schizophrenia.



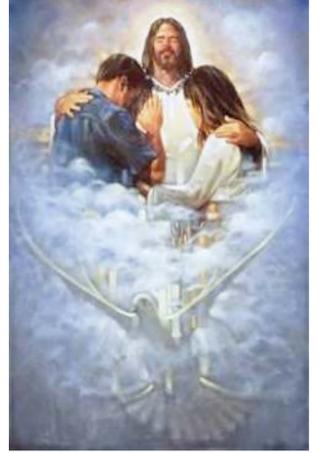
What Does the Bible Say About Suicide

Does everyone would agree that life is the most precious gift that human beings have been given. Just the chance to be alive on this earth and play a part in the grand scheme of God's eternal plan is a privilege.

Deuteronomy 30:15-16 reads: "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you ..."

Here's another way we can look at this: Does cancer separate us from the love of God? No. Can a sudden automobile accident separate us from the love of God? No. Can a heart attack or massive stroke separate us from the love of God? No. What about AIDS, or a drive-by shooting, or malaria, or a terrorist bomb separate us from the love of God? Absolutely not.

This is not meant to glorify "suicide," it is wrong, it is a sin. But suicide is not stronger than the love of God. Does this mean everyone who commits suicide won't go to hell? NO. People don't go to hell because of the way they died. They go to hell because of the way they lived. The greatest sin is to say "No" to Jesus Christ. The real issue is this ... is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? Your answer to that is what will determine if you go to heaven or hell.



Does Suicide Send You to Hell?

By its very nature, suicide ends life before anyone can confess their sin and ask forgiveness. So if we want to live by the "law," then one would believe that a person committing suicide would go to hell because there wasn't time to confess and repent.

But the Bible and the ministry of Jesus, does not teach that.

Yes, sin leads to death, but we are all sinners, and by the grace of God, the blood of Christ cleanses us of every sin (1 John 1:7). If we trust Christ, we are completely forgiven of ALL of our sins (Ephesians 1:7). Therefore we have all received salvation and eternal life with the Father (1 John 5:13).

Nothing can separate a child of God from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). As Paul proclaims, neither height or depth, length or breadth, things present or things to come can keep us from the love of God.

No matter how difficult our circumstances, how discouraging our defeats, or how badly we may be mistreated ... nothing in this life can separate us from the love of God.

If you know Jesus, you are saved forever. Neither death nor life can keep us from the Father's love. The grave has lost its victory, death has lost its sting. Death, no matter how, cannot keep us from the love of God.

Does cancer separate us from the love of God? No. Can a sudden automobile accident separate us from the love of God? No. Can a heart attack or massive stroke separate us from the love of God? No. What about AIDS, or a drive-by shooting, or malaria, or a terrorist bomb separate us from the love of God? Absolutely not.

This is not meant to glorify "suicide," it is wrong, it is a sin. But suicide is not stronger than the love of God. Does this mean everyone who commits suicide won't go to hell? NO. People don't go to hell because of the way they died. They go to hell because of the way they lived. The greatest sin is to say "No" to Jesus Christ.

The real issue is this ... is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? Your answer to that is what will determine if you go to heaven or hell.

If you are contemplating suicide and are relying on God's grace to get you to heaven, PLEASE stop for a moment ... God's grace never means that we have a free license to sin! Those who willfully sin after knowing God's grace, are in far greater danger than those who know less.

Though you may feel that God is far from you right now, He is much nearer than you think. He may even be speaking to you through these words! Please open your ears and hear Him tell you how valuable your life is. He has a wonderful plan for you, and the purpose for your life has not yet been fulfilled. God loves you, and so do many people around you! God would not be God if He could not work this situation (no matter how unbearable it may seem) for His glory and for the good in your own life.

Signs That a Person May Be Contemplating Suicide

As Christians, we need to know the warning signs of suicide, and learn how we can help save someone from making a tragic decision.

There are many behavioral indicators that can help parents or friends recognize the threat of suicide in a loved one. Since mental and substance-related disorders so frequently accompany suicidal behavior, many of the cues to be looked for are symptoms associated with such disorders as depression, bipolar disorder (manic depression), anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug use, disruptive behavior disorders, borderline personality disorder, and schizophrenia.

Some common symptoms of these disorders include:

- Extreme personality changes
• Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
• Significant loss or gain in appetite
• Difficulty falling asleep or wanting to sleep all day
• Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
• Withdrawal from family and friends
• Sadness, irritability, or indifference
• Having trouble concentrating
• Extreme anxiety or panic
• Aggressive, destructive, or defiant behavior
• Poor school performance
• Not taking care of personal appearance, changes in appearance or personality
• Talking about suicide
• Previous attempts at suicide
• A triggering event, such as a divorce, demotion, or death in the family
• Risky behaviors
• Increased use of alcohol or drugs
• Getting "affairs in order", such as giving away personal items, making a will, etc.
• Constantly talking about death

Tragically, many of these signs go unrecognized. And while suffering from one of these symptoms certainly does not necessarily mean that one is suicidal, it's always best to communicate openly with a loved one who has one or more of these behaviors, especially if they are unusual for that person.

There are also some more obvious signs of the potential for committing suicide. Putting one's affairs in order, such as giving or throwing away favorite belongings, is a strong clue. And it can't be stressed more strongly that any talk of death or suicide should be taken seriously.

For teenagers, sometimes their overwhelming hopelessness is enough to cause them to take their own lives. Most teens who survive suicide attempts say that they tried to kill themselves because they were trying to escape a situation that seemed impossible to deal with, or they were trying to escape overwhelming feelings like rejection, guilt, anger, or sadness.

The kinds of problems that teenagers face may be different from those of adults, but the problems are very real to the teens that are facing them. Teenagers face the pressures of trying fit in socially, to perform academically, and to act responsibly. Teens are given more freedom which means more responsibility that they are sometimes not ready to handle. If a teen is facing a problem and has nobody to talk to, they may feel neglected, unwanted, and alone. If a teen continues to encounter their problems alone, they may become overwhelmed and think that suicide is the only way out.

If the threat is immediate, if your friend or loved one tells you he or she is going to commit suicide, you must act immediately. Don't leave the person alone, and don't try to argue. Instead, ask questions like, "Have you thought about how you'd do it?" and "Have you decided when you'll do it?" If the person has a defined plan, the means are easily available, and the method is a lethal one, the risk of suicide is obviously severe.

In such an instance, you must take the individual to the nearest psychiatric facility or hospital emergency room. If you are together on the phone, you may even need to call 911 or the police. Remember, under such circumstances no actions on your part should be considered too extreme — you are trying to save a life.

An overwhelming majority of young people who hear a suicide threat from a friend or loved one don't report the threat to an adult. Take all threats seriously — you are not betraying someone's trust by trying to keep them alive.



How You Can Help

Since people who are contemplating suicide feel so alone and helpless, the most important thing to do is if you think a friend or loved one is suicidal is to communicate with him or her openly and frequently. Make it clear that you care, stress your willingness to listen. Also, be sure to take all talk of suicide seriously. Don't assume that people who talk about killing themselves won't really do it.

An estimated 80 percent of all those who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions or mention their feelings to a friend or family member. And don't ignore what may seem like casual threats or remarks. Statements like "You'll be sorry when I'm dead" and "I can't see any way out," no matter how off-the-cuff or jokingly said, may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

Never assume that someone who is determined to end his or her life can't be stopped. Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, wavering until the very last moment between wanting to live and wanting to die. Most suicidal people do not want death; they want the pain to stop. The impulse to end it all, though, no matter how overpowering, does not last forever.

of a loved one by suicide. In the beginning, survivors are not in control of their emotions. The pain is so great that it is difficult for many to find hope or envision a future that holds any happiness.

Sometimes survivors are so tormented by their loss that they consider ending their own lives. They reason that by dying, they would be able to join their loved ones.

They bury their dead, but then they have to live with the pain forever.

Many live with deep guilt. "If only I had been there when they needed me." "If only I hadn't gone to the store that morning." "I should have been a better dad, husband, wife or mother."

If you are a survivor, you need to know that you are not responsible for another person's suicide. You did not take the pills. You didn't pull the trigger. You didn't slash their wrist, or close the garage door. They did! Whether or not they were in a sound mind or not, at the time, they made the final fatal decision to chose death over life.

They are the ones who will have to give an account for what they have done, not you. Romans 14:12 says, "each of us will give an account of himself to God."

What can you do to help? You can give them an ear to pour out their grief. By not forgetting them and by being there for them with Christian love and sincere concern. By keeping in contact with them, by praying for them, by not blaming them or condemning them.

Putting Your Faith in God

The solution to despair and hopelessness is not suicide, but faith in God.

Psalms 33:20-22 tells us to "wait in hope for the Lord, He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us. O Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

So whatever we are going through, no matter how difficult life may be, or who or what may be coming against us ... we need to put our hope, our faith and our trust in God. He will comfort us and deliver us.

If they do not know Christ, then we need to be a witness for Him. Lead them to Christ. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come." So when we accept Christ, God gives us a brand new life and sees us as completely holy and righteous.

He will provide us a comforter, the Holy Spirit, to help us, assist us, and give us the strength and hope we need to overcome what ever may be bringing about our suicidal thoughts. Putting our mind on Christ and not the problems in life, and allowing the Holy Spirit to fight our battles for us will bring us in line with God's Will and His plan for us.

Jesus stated in John 10:10, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." Whatever the devil teaches is dead, destroyed ... and hopes are stolen.

Survivors feel many strong emotions. Anger is part of the traumatic and complicated grief process. Sometimes, the anger is focused at individuals who may have hurt their loved one. Or directed at mental health professionals, whom they consider insensitive to their grief, or should have prevented the suicide if the loved one was undergoing therapeutic care.

Just as ailments in our physical body need to be treated with medicine to be healed, the same is true of our emotions. One powerful way to fight against depression, is to apply and confess God's Word as a healing balm to the places where you have been wounded.

For instance, if you have unforgiveness in your heart, begin to confess God's verses for love and forgiveness, even if they don't exactly feel true right at the moment. If you feel worthless, confess the Scriptures of God's great love for you.

If you deliberately take these living words and hold on to them for dear life, you will have that lying enemy on the run. The devil simply cannot stand against the Word of God spoken in faith. God's Words are like spiritual antibiotics, destroying every germ and unclean thing in their path.

Ministries and Organizations to Help You in Hampton Roads

If you are depressed, confused about living, and contemplating suicide, speak to someone you can trust to help you immediately ... a parent, teacher, pastor, good friend. Have them make an appointment with a psychological or psychiatric counselor who can help you. You can find psychotherapy counselors in this issue of The Church Guide who can work with you and stand by you, as you get your life back on track and overcome the adversity.

Other sources of help can be found at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255.

Here are some support groups for survivors of suicide.

NEWPORT NEWS Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS) Meets at Catholic Charities 12829 Jefferson Ave., Suite 101 Newport News, VA 23608 Contact Tom Crossman (757) 875-0060 Meeting the 3rd Tuesday at 7:30 pm.

Veteran Affairs Medical Center Teresa B. Godoy, L.C.S.W. Suicide Prevention Coordinator Hampton VAMC 100 Emancipation Drive Hampton 23667 (757) 722-9961 ext 1490 PORTSMOUTH

Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS) Contact: Christine Gilchrist, L.C.S.W. (757) 483-5111 Meeting the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 7-9 pm. Please call first. Meeting at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, 4811 High Street, Portsmouth.

Prayer To God "Father, I receive Your breath of Life into my mortal body now. I lift up my hands to You, to receive it; I fix my hopes on You and turn my life completely over to You. From this day forth I pray that you will give me the grace and wisdom to guard my heart diligently, to obey You and to resist every scheme of the enemy. I commit all I am to You and I have full faith that You are able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all I could ever ask or think. Lord, send me the help I need now. Show me the way.

For more information, please visit: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention www.afsp.org American Association of Suicidology www.suicidology.org International Association for Suicide Prevention www.iasp.info

Other sources of help can be found at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255.

Here are some support groups for survivors of suicide.

NEWPORT NEWS Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS) Meets at Catholic Charities 12829 Jefferson Ave., Suite 101 Newport News, VA 23608 Contact Tom Crossman (757) 875-0060 Meeting the 3rd Tuesday at 7:30 pm.

that the only way out is death. The answer is Jesus.

There is hope. There is a better way. Someone cares for you. You aren't alone. Don't pull that trigger. Don't take those pills. Don't decide upon a permanent solution for a temporary problem.

Just as ailments in our physical body need to be treated with medicine to be healed, the same is true of our emotions. One powerful way to fight against depression, is to apply and confess God's Word as a healing balm to the places where you have been wounded.

For instance, if you have unforgiveness in your heart, begin to confess God's verses for love and forgiveness, even if they don't exactly feel true right at the moment. If you feel worthless, confess the Scriptures of God's great love for you.

If you deliberately take these living words and hold on to them for dear life, you will have that lying enemy on the run. The devil simply cannot stand against the Word of God spoken in faith. God's Words are like spiritual antibiotics, destroying every germ and unclean thing in their path.

Ministries and Organizations to Help You in Hampton Roads

If you are depressed, confused about living, and contemplating suicide, speak to someone you can trust to help you immediately ... a parent, teacher, pastor, good friend. Have them make an appointment with a psychological or psychiatric counselor who can help you. You can find psychotherapy counselors in this issue of The Church Guide who can work with you and stand by you, as you get your life back on track and overcome the adversity.

Other sources of help can be found at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255.

Here are some support groups for survivors of suicide.

NEWPORT NEWS Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS) Meets at Catholic Charities 12829 Jefferson Ave., Suite 101 Newport News, VA 23608 Contact Tom Crossman (757) 875-0060 Meeting the 3rd Tuesday at 7:30 pm.

Veteran Affairs Medical Center Teresa B. Godoy, L.C.S.W. Suicide Prevention Coordinator Hampton VAMC 100 Emancipation Drive Hampton 23667 (757) 722-9961 ext 1490 PORTSMOUTH

Survivors of Suicide Group (SOS) Contact: Christine Gilchrist, L.C.S.W. (757) 483-5111 Meeting the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 7-9 pm. Please call first. Meeting at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, 4811 High Street, Portsmouth.

Prayer To God "Father, I receive Your breath of Life into my mortal body now. I lift up my hands to You, to receive it; I fix my hopes on You and turn my life completely over to You. From this day forth I pray that you will give me the grace and wisdom to guard my heart diligently, to obey You and to resist every scheme of the enemy. I commit all I am to You and I have full faith that You are able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all I could ever ask or think. Lord, send me the help I need now. Show me the way.

For more information, please visit: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention www.afsp.org American Association of Suicidology www.suicidology.org International Association for Suicide Prevention www.iasp.info

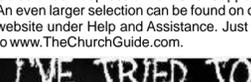
VIRGINIA BEACH Still Standing: Surviving Suicide Support Group Contact Elaine Roberts (757) 464-9289 Meeting at Spring Branch Community Church, 1500 N. Great Neck Road, Virginia Beach 23451 Second Tuesday of each month 7-9 pm

COPES (Coalition of Preventing Elder Suicide) 3432 Virginia Beach Blvd. Virginia Beach 23452 (757) 437-3537

I Need a Lighthouse Foundation Chairperson Kathleen Wakefield 2600 Barrett Street Virginia Beach 23452 (757) 496-9775 www.ineedalighthousefoundation.org

You can also find a number of other ministries listed in this issue of The Church Guide under "depression" or "Grief Support." An even larger selection can be found on our website under Help and Assistance. Just go to www.TheChurchGuide.com.

IVE TRIED TO KILL MYSELF ... MORE THAN ONCE.



Prayer To God "Father, I receive Your breath of Life into my mortal body now. I lift up my hands to You, to receive it; I fix my hopes on You and turn my life completely over to You. From this day forth I pray that you will give me the grace and wisdom to guard my heart diligently, to obey You and to resist every scheme of the enemy. I commit all I am to You and I have full faith that You are able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all I could ever ask or think. Lord, send me the help I need now. Show me the way.

For more information, please visit: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention www.afsp.org American Association of Suicidology www.suicidology.org International Association for Suicide Prevention www.iasp.info