



Reaching those in times of need

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March 2019 Newsletter

FLORIDA SUICIDE PREVENTION COALITION

*A statewide, grassroots organization
of survivors, crisis centers, & interested citizens*

ARE YOU A FSPC MEMBER?

Join FSPC, a statewide, grassroots organization of survivors, crisis centers, & interested individuals. Collaborate to advance suicide prevention efforts in larger numbers: get involved, volunteer with local & state FSPC activities, & obtain free or reduced registration at FSPC events. Membership info: <http://floridasuicideprevention.org/membership/>

**JOIN OR
RENEW
TODAY**

FSPC NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Submit news, events, poems, reviews, & writings for FSPC Newsletter inclusion consideration. Be sure to follow safe messaging guidelines. Email Steve Roggenbaum, Chair, at roggenba@usf.edu

A SUPPORT GROUP IN YOUR PHONE. HEALING FOR MENTAL ILLNESS COMES ONE TEXT AT A TIME.

By Justine Griffin, Tampa Bay Times, 2/22/19
Link: <https://www.tampabay.com/health/a-support-group-in-your-phone-healing-for-mental-illness-comes-one-text-at-a-time-20190222/>

As rates of depression rise, a Tampa man launches Cope Notes, a service that sends out an uplifting message every day to people struggling with stress, anxiety, and negative thoughts.

Johnny Crowder used to have a negative outlook on the world. He grew up in what he described as an abusive household. He was diagnosed with a slew of mental illnesses during his formative years, from bipolar disorder to obsessive compulsive disorder. It was easy for him to feel down about himself.

“I realized how I was thinking was contributing to my struggles,” said Crowder, a 26-year-old Tampa native. “But I couldn’t climb out of it.” So he started filling sticky notes with positive, affirmative messages, and leaving them around his house. On one note, he remembers penciling, “You deserve to spend time with people who care about you.” It made a difference. For just a few seconds a day, he'd feel better. But eventually the notes became commonplace, and their effect seemed to wear off.

So he decided to try it another way. This time, by sending uplifting text messages to his friends to see how they reacted. “The first text, I sent to about 32 friends in my contacts, with the same message. Nearly everyone responded,” he said. “They interpreted it differently based on their own lives, but I was surprised to see so many of them replied with ‘How did you know?’ Like I knew they were going through something.”

That's how Crowder founded Cope Notes. It's a text messaging service aimed at those going through a difficult time. Every day, a Cope Notes user will get a random message, usually something uplifting, but it could also be advice about an exercise to try or tips to boost positivity. Users are encouraged to text back, and to use the thread as their own "digital journal," Crowder said.



“People would rather text their friends than talk to them about something difficult,” he said. “We wanted to create something that was optionally interactive. Some of the texts are prompts, and while it’s not necessarily a two-way conversation, we want the platform to foster independence. The goal is not to be something people rely on forever.”

Crowder’s timing, it seems, is important. Depression diagnosis rates rose 33 percent from 2013 to 2016, according to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association's Health of America Report. Children and millennials seem to be the most at risk, with diagnosis rates spiking by 63 percent and 47 percent, respectively, over the same period. Women, too, seem to suffer from depression more often, with diagnosis rates that are double those of men, according to the Blue Cross report. What’s more, the report said, people with depression are nearly 30 percent less healthy on average than those without it, and 85 percent also suffer from other chronic health conditions.

Cope Notes launched quietly nearly a year ago from Crowder's South Tampa home, and now has about 1,000 users. Crowder said they range in age from 14 to 40. He's the one writing the messages that are delivered each day, but they are reviewed by a panel of mental health counselors and professors, public relations professionals and privacy compliance officials. The service costs \$9.99 a month, or \$8.99 a month for an annual subscription. There's also an option of a one-week free trial.

A recent example of a Cope Notes message: "When you hold the door open for someone, and they step on your foot, you should still be proud. Their bad decision doesn't invalidate your good one." Another one said, “The entire world was changed by people just like you. Normal folks who didn't think they were just about to change the world. Don't underestimate yourself."

And this: "Coloring for 15 minutes can help clear your mind and soothe anxiety. It may sound childish, but how do you think adult coloring books became best sellers?" Cope Notes is not meant to replace therapy or clinical treatment, but it can supplement it, said Kristin Kosyluk, an assistant professor in the Department of Mental Health Law & Policy at the University of South Florida. She said Crowder and his text messaging platform are also good examples of where mental health care is headed.

“We’re moving toward a recovery model and away from a medical model,” Kosyluk said. “It gives someone like Johnny, who has been through the system and has personal experience, the authority and credibility to provide support to others.”

Kosyluk cited the "Alcoholics Anonymous" community — where people who have suffered from the same afflictions, comfort and support one another — as a good example of a recovery model. “Cope Notes has that piece to it because Johnny is open about his experiences,” she said. “A lot of times, people are seeking help in a clinical setting and not finding support in their own communities. A simple text message that somebody receives, that’s an intervention being delivered in the moment.” Kosyluk is working with Crowder to potentially collect research data from Cope Note users in the future.

Before becoming a mental health activist in 2011, speaking about his survival story to community groups and schools, Crowder tried just about anything that would help as he struggled with depression. “I tried meditation apps, the Tony Robbins ‘walk on coals’ type self-help people. You name it, I was hungry for anything that would help me cope with what was happening to me.” But what bothered him most about the programs he tried were the promises of an overnight cure. “It takes a long time to feel better. There’s no flip of a switch in your brain that makes everything normal,” he said. “It takes a lot of tiny steps and nudges in the right direction over time to heal and come up with healthy coping practices.”

FSPC CONFERENCE: STILL TIME TO REGISTER & ATTEND!

FSPC’s annual *Florida Taking Action for Suicide Prevention Conference* is being hosted at the Florida Sheriffs Association Training Center, 2617 Mahan Drive Tallahassee, Florida on two-half days, March 19 - 20, 2019. Registration (**early bird by 2/28/19**) is open and available online or by mail: <http://floridasuicideprevention.org/fspcevents/>

Amazing line up of opportunities.

- Twenty (20) conference sessions for selection
- Two keynote presentations on important topics
- FSPC Region Director Social Hour - mingle & network with presenters, Region Directors, & conferees
- an early bird special conference registration fee until 2/28/19 (with even greater savings for FSPC members)

FSPC has reserved a *limited* block of rooms at *Candlewood Suites Tallahassee* (2815 Lakeshore Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312) for \$99 (single) per night just a few miles from the conference location. Call to reserve a room at the special rate: 850-597-7000 (use group name “Florida Suicide Prevention”). *As of this printing (2/27), there are several rooms (only single rooms) still remaining at this special rate.*

SUPPORT FSPC WHEN YOU SHOP

Amazon donates to FSPC, when you make an online (at Amazon) purchase. Support FSPC by going to smile.amazon.com and register the *Florida Suicide Prevention Coalition* (FSPC) as your chosen charity. Then start shopping & support suicide prevention.



NEWSWORTHY

Gov. Cuomo signs law to prevent people who show signs of being a threat from purchasing, possessing firearms

February 26, 2019 NXNow News

Link: <https://northcountrynow.com/news/gov-cuomo-signs-law-prevent-people-who-show-signs-being-threat-purchasing-possessing-firearms>

Governor Andrew Cuomo fulfilled his promise to sign the Red Flag Bill, a key component of his 2019 Justice Agenda, within the first 100 days of the new legislative session.

The Red Flag Bill, also known as the extreme risk protection order bill, prevents individuals who show signs of being a threat to themselves or others from purchasing or possessing any kind of firearm.

This legislation builds on New York's gun laws and makes New York the first in the United States to empower its teachers and school administrators to prevent school shootings by pursuing court intervention.

"The United States loses more people to gun deaths than most developed nations. The first year of President Trump's administration, we lost 40,000 people to gun deaths - the highest number in 50 years. New York led the way by passing the strongest gun safety laws in the nation, but more must be done to end this carnage," Governor Cuomo said. "Today New York is proud to pass the first-in-the-nation Red Flag Bill that empowers school teachers to do something when they believe something bad is going to happen. We are empowering teachers not by giving them guns like the President wants - but by arming and empowering them with the law, so when a teacher or family member sees there is a problem, they can go to a judge and get a court-ordered evaluation. The Red Flag Bill will save lives and doesn't infringe on anybody's rights and it is common sense."

No law currently exists in New York State that enables a court to issue an order to temporarily seize firearms from a person who is showing red flags, like violent behavior, or is believed to pose a severe threat of harm to himself, herself, or others unless that person has also been accused of a crime or family offense.

In addition, no state in the nation currently empowers its teachers and school administrators to prevent school shootings by pursuing court intervention.

ALSO NEWSWORTHY

SAMHSA National Mental Health Awareness Day theme is “Suicide Prevention: Strategies that Work

Link: <https://www.samhsa.gov/childrens-awareness-day>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day 2019! Since 2005, states have been celebrating Awareness Day to raise awareness about the importance of children’s mental health and to show that positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development.

Awareness Day 2019 will be observed on Monday, May 6. This year’s Awareness Day theme is “Suicide Prevention: Strategies that Work,” and the event will focus on the impact that suicide has on children, youth, young adults, families, and communities. During the national event, SAMHSA will showcase evidence-based strategies to prevent suicide by connecting those in need to information, services, and supports.

SAMHSA’s national event will include suicide prevention experts and senior government officials along with a family member and youth who will share evidence-based practices that help save lives. The format will be similar to a TED Talk, providing an opportunity to inform state agency personnel; health care providers; child-serving professionals; and families, youth, and young adults across the country about the latest practices and preventions. SAMHSA will webcast the event.

RESEARCH FOR THE REST OF US



Sometimes important research is filled with jargon, is hard to understand, or doesn't seem to make sense. We've tried to summarize research in common English language.

Injury Control Research Center on Suicide Prevention Hosts Archived Webinar: *Prevention Suicide through Social Connectedness. Promoting Connectedness for Youth through Social Networks*

Link: <http://suicideprevention-icrc-s.org/event/promoting-connectedness-youth-through-social-networks>

This was the second webinar of the ICRC-S 2018-19 webinar series, Preventing Suicide by Promoting Social Connectedness: Promoting Connectedness for Youth through Social Networks and

Sources of Strength. Sources of Strength is a universal suicide prevention program that builds protective factors and reduces the risk of suicide for vulnerable youth through a strengths-based focus on social connectedness and peer group norms. In this webinar, Dr. Peter Wyman, PhD, from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Suicide at the University of Rochester, reviewed research on the influence of school-based social networks to adolescent risk and protective factors for suicidal behaviors, discussed adolescent exposure to risk factors for suicide, and discussed how school-based social networks can be used to promote social connectedness and address adolescent relational needs. Dr. Wyman also reviewed research findings regarding the Sources of Strength impact on and through school-based networks. Scott LoMurray, Deputy Director, from Sources of Strength, provided an overview of Sources of Strength as an evidence-based universal upstream intervention, reviewed how diverse peer leaders and trusted adults use social connectedness as a protective factor to transform behavior and social norms at a school-wide level, and examined how the shared risk and protective factor framework and interventions like that of Sources of Strength can impact a variety of negative behaviors and outcomes. Presenters briefly reviewed replication of Sources of Strength with populations such as LGBTQ and Tribal youth, to promote social connectedness and positive group norms.

AVAILABLE RESOURCE

American Association of Suicidology Releases Social Media and Suicide Content Tipsheet for Parents and Other Adults

Link: <https://www.suicidology.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=9BI5g4TXz54%3d&portalid=14>

In response to recent events surrounding social media and suicide content, the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), in partnership with pediatricians and subject matter experts, has released an easy-to-use [tipsheet](#) for parents, health and behavioral health providers, and caregivers. It is the goal of AAS and our member experts to provide parents and providers the help they need to make the world safer for youth at risk for suicide.

“Increasingly, as children live digital lives, they will be at risk of encountering disturbing images of suicide and self-injury. The social media-based platform fixes for this will take some time to achieve. Until that time, it’s the responsibility of parents and clinicians

to take an active interest in keeping children safe on digital and social media platforms,” said April Foreman, PhD, Executive Committee Member of the AAS Board. “We hope that as parents and providers take a more active role, that social media platforms will

be good community partners and develop the solutions our children need to be safe in the digital spaces they’re likely to visit.”

Social media has its inherent benefits (community, connectedness, and recreation) and disadvantages (potential isolation, sharing age-inappropriate content, and anonymized discrimination) and understanding a child’s use of it can provide adults with the foundation of a strategy for everyday household use. This [tipsheet](#) is meant to be the first step in that process.



WHAT'S HAPPENING



March 19 & 20, 2019. *FSPC's Fourth Annual Florida Taking Action for Suicide Prevention Conference* is a two-half day event in Tallahassee. <http://floridasuicideprevention.org/fspcevents/>

March 20, 2019 (Wed., 1:30 pm). *Florida's Suicide Prevention Coordinating Council meeting* in Tallahassee is open to interested observers. <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/mental-health/suicide-prevention/meetings>

March 20, 2019 (Wed., 6:30 pm). *Lighting the Darkness Evening of Remembrance: An Evening to Remember Lives Lost to Suicide* sponsored by Big Bend Hospice. GFWC Woman's Club of Tallahassee, 1513 Cristobal Drive. Free. For info, contact Caitlin Burn at caitlin@bigbendhospice.org

March 21, 2019 (8:30 am – 4:00 pm). *Suicide Prevention Day at the Capitol* (Tallahassee) sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). More information to follow.

May 6, 2019. SAMHSA's National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day: Suicide Prevention: Strategies that Work. Live Webcast of National Event. More information: <https://www.samhsa.gov/childrens-awareness-day>

RESOURCES



If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call **1-800-273- 8255** (*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*).

Crisis Text Line – text “start” to **741-741**

Veteran's Crisis Line **1-800-273- 8255, press 1** & <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

Resources for Survivors of Suicide Loss. SAVE. Suicide Awareness Voices for Education maintains a resource list at: <http://suicidiegrief.save.org/ResourceLibrary>

Suicide Loss Survivors. The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) hosts a webpage with listed resources for survivors of suicide loss at <http://www.suicidology.org/suicide-survivors/suicide-loss-survivors>

Suicide Grief Resources. Helpful information, tools, and links for people bereaved by suicide at <http://suicidiegriefresources.org/>

STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana. (2016). *Help & Hope: For Survivors of Suicide Loss*. Retrieved from <http://www.stopsuicidenow.org/toolkits-now-available/>

Florida's Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention (DCF): <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/mental-health/suicide-prevention>

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention: The Public-Private Partnership Advancing the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: <http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/resources>

Coping After Suicide Loss: Tips for Grieving Adults, Children, and Schools. The American Psychological Association tip sheet. <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/suicide-coping-tips.pdf>

The Steve Fund. Dedicated to the mental health and emotional well-being of students of color. <https://www.stevfund.org/>

AN EXTRA HELPING . . .

Suicide Grief: Healing After a Loved One's Suicide

By Mayo Clinic Staff

A loved one's suicide can be emotionally devastating. Use healthy coping strategies — such as seeking support — to begin the journey to healing and acceptance.

When a loved one dies by suicide, overwhelming emotions can leave you reeling. Your grief might be heart wrenching. At the same time, you might be consumed by guilt — wondering if you could have done something to prevent your loved one's death.

As you face life after a loved one's suicide, remember that you don't have to go through it alone.

Brace for powerful emotions

A loved one's suicide can trigger intense emotions. For example:

- **Shock.** Disbelief and emotional numbness might set in. You might think that your loved one's suicide couldn't possibly be real.
- **Anger.** You might be angry with your loved one for abandoning you or leaving you with a legacy of grief — or angry with yourself or others for missing clues about suicidal intentions.
- **Guilt.** You might replay "what if" and "if only" scenarios in your mind, blaming yourself for your loved one's death.
- **Despair.** You might be gripped by sadness, loneliness or helplessness. You might have a physical collapse or even consider suicide yourself.
- **Confusion.** Many people try to make some sense out of the death, or try to understand why their loved one took his or her life. But, you'll likely always have some unanswered questions.
- **Feelings of rejection.** You might wonder why your relationship wasn't enough to keep your loved one from dying by suicide.

You might continue to experience intense reactions during the weeks and months after your loved one's suicide — including nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty concentrating, social withdrawal and loss of interest in usual activities — especially if you witnessed or discovered the suicide.

Dealing with stigma

Many people have trouble discussing suicide, and might not reach out to you. This could leave you feeling isolated or abandoned if the support you expected to receive just isn't there.

Additionally, some religions limit the rituals available to people who've died by suicide, which could also leave you feeling alone. You might also feel deprived of some of the usual tools you depended on in the past to help you cope.

Adopt healthy coping strategies

The aftermath of a loved one's suicide can be physically and emotionally exhausting. As you work through your grief, be careful to protect your own well-being.

- **Keep in touch.** Reach out to loved ones, friends and spiritual leaders for comfort, understanding and healing. Surround yourself with people who are willing to listen when you need to talk, as well as those who'll simply offer a shoulder to lean on when you'd rather be silent.
- **Grieve in your own way.** Do what's right for you, not necessarily someone else. There is no single "right" way to grieve. If you find it too painful to visit your loved one's gravesite or share the details of your loved one's death, wait until you're ready.
- **Be prepared for painful reminders.** Anniversaries, holidays and other special occasions can be painful reminders of your loved one's suicide. Don't chide yourself for being sad or mournful. Instead, consider changing or suspending family traditions that are too painful to continue.
- **Don't rush yourself.** Losing someone to suicide is a tremendous blow, and healing must occur at its own pace. Don't be hurried by anyone else's expectations that it's been "long enough."
- **Expect setbacks.** Some days will be better than others, even years after the suicide — and that's OK. Healing doesn't often happen in a straight line.

- **Consider a support group for families affected by suicide.** Sharing your story with others who are experiencing the same type of grief might help you find a sense of purpose or strength. However, if you find going to these groups keeps you ruminating on your loved one's death, seek out other methods of support.

Know when to seek professional help

If you experience intense or unrelenting anguish or physical problems, ask your doctor or mental health provider for help. Seeking professional help is especially important if you think you might be depressed or you have recurring thoughts of suicide. Unresolved grief can turn into complicated grief, where painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that you have trouble resuming your own life.

Depending on the circumstances, you might benefit from individual or family therapy — either to get you through the worst of the crisis or to help you adjust to life after suicide. Short-term medication can be helpful in some cases, too.

Face the future with a sense of peace

In the aftermath of a loved one's suicide, you might feel like you can't go on or that you'll never enjoy life again.

In truth, you might always wonder why it happened — and reminders might trigger painful feelings even years later. Eventually, however, the raw intensity of your grief will fade. The tragedy of the suicide won't dominate your days and nights.

Understanding the complicated legacy of suicide and how to cope with palpable grief can help you find peace and healing, while still honoring the memory of your loved one.

FSPC MEMBERSHIP

New FSPC Membership or Renewal information available online at: <http://floridasuicideprevention.org/membership>