

When Mental Illness Hits Home

is a unique conference for friends and family members who journey with people with mental illness and for professionals in the mental health field.

2021 Sponsors

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When Mental Illness Hits Home

Surviving and Thriving in TURBULENT TIMES

An annual conference to help
those journeying with people
with mental illness

August 27, 2021
9 am – 4 pm

IN PERSON
at the
National Shrine of
Our Lady of the Snows





SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN TURBULENT TIMES

Friday, August 27, 2021 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Shrine Visitors Center

Morning Keynote Presentation:
MAKING THE PIECES FIT: UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE FROM A SOCIO-CULTURAL LENS

Have you heard that 90% of Americans who die from suicide had a severe mental illness? Do you know where that stat comes from? What if I told you this was not only untrue, but a harmful view of suicide and those fighting it? The fact is that culture and community play a much larger role in suicide than mental illness and “mental illness” is much more a reflection of socio-cultural factors than biological determinism. It is time we start talking about what is wrong with the world around us and why so many people don’t feel like they have lives worth living. It is time we talk about the real problems and what we can do about it.

Afternoon Keynote Presentation:
SOCIAL MEDIA AND SUICIDE: THE DANGER OF GETTING SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION FROM THE NEWS

You’ve probably heard at some point that social media and screen time are making our youth depressed and suicidal. You have even heard that you should limit your children’s “screen time” and that it will improve their wellness and reduce their risk. NONE OF THIS IS TRUE. There are some complicated relationships between screen time and wellness and some interesting associations between social media use and suicide in young women, but none of it suggests a causal relationship. This presentation will review the research we have on social media, screen time and emotional wellness and discuss the need to avoid moral panic while taking a reasonable approach to managing youth social media use.



Bart Andrews, PhD, is the Chief Clinical Officer at Behavioral Health Response. Dr. Andrews is the Chair of Missouri’s Suicide Prevention Network, member of the Suicide Lifeline’s Standards, Training and Practices committee, a member of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center’s (SPRC) Steering Committee, a ZeroSuicide Academy Faculty member and lead facilitator for Missouri’s Suicide Prevention in Healthcare ECHO. Dr. Andrews is a suicide attempt survivor and a proponent of embracing lived expertise in our suicide prevention efforts.

Additional Morning Presentation:
SUICIDE: WHY ARE THE MIDDLE-AGED AT RISK AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Deaths by suicide nationwide from 2000-2016 rose 30 percent (APA, 2019). In the decade, rates rose 23 percent in Illinois alone (Behcon). There is no doubt time and money are being invested into this life-saving effort, but research shows that suicide awareness and prevention efforts do not lead to significant rates of decline (Jaffe, 2014). With that being said, what can be done differently to reduce rates of suicide, and more specifically, among the middle-aged? Where can we re-invest time and money to have the most impact? First, it would be advantageous to identify those specific concerns and issues facing men and women of middle age (e.g., physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually). Second, educating healthcare providers, clinicians and other professionals about these issues and providing meaningful ways for these professionals to engage with patients. Third,

bringing depression to the forefront. Depression is often under-reported, especially among males. However, many are struggling and afraid to discuss this topic and the use of medication with healthcare providers. Offering guidance to healthcare providers can help reduce the stigma and shame that often accompanies these mental health concerns. Providing current research about patient hesitancy and fear will help enlighten the medical community, while more adequately serving their communities.



Dr. Olivia Johnson is a subject expert in police suicide and prevention and recently received the Law Enforcement Psychological Autopsy Certification from the American Association of Suicidology. She holds a master’s in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri-St. Louis and a doctorate in Organizational Leadership Management from the University of Phoenix. Dr. Johnson is founder of the Blue Wall Institute, an Air Force veteran, former police officer and published author. Dr. Johnson served as an Advisory Board member for VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Program regarding curriculum review for de-escalation training and techniques. She formerly worked as a Senior Research Associate for the Institute for Intergovernmental Research as a Lead Instructor for the VALOR Officer Safety Program and was the Program Advisor and Lead Instructor for the Suicide Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers (SAFLEO) Program.

Additional Afternoon Presentation:
FINDING HOPE: PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING THOSE AT RISK

Finding hope when a loved one or someone we are concerned about attempts suicide or struggles with suicide ideation can be difficult. However, an increasing range of intervention options exist that can save lives. Safety planning interventions, lethal means counseling and other tools have expanded the range of approaches open to mental health professionals. In addition, it is clear that developing community protective factors, along with a wide range of research-tested self-care skills, must be increasingly taught and emphasized. AFSP-Illinois Board Member Mike Bushman will share insights from newly released American Foundation for Suicide Prevention programs called “Finding Hope” and “It’s Real: Youth Mental Health.” Mike will also discuss research that informed his latest book on a program designed to teach teens to help other teens and themselves.

Mike Bushman is a writer, speaker and trainer focused on mental health and suicide prevention. Mike serves as a board member with the Illinois Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), a volunteer with other mental health organizations and as a Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor. He regularly conducts More Than Sad, Talk Saves Lives and other training programs on behalf of AFSP and has extensively shared his personal story of recovery and hope.

