

The Creative Forum

August 2019

A Monthly Publication of Creative Wellness Opportunities
A Peer Run Service of the Mental Health Association

Being There - A talk about Suicide Prevention



When I was 21 years old, I attempted suicide. I was living in a community that was homophobic, classist, hyper-religious and culturally stifling. My mental health services provider and most of my “friends” at the time refused to acknowledge the possibility that I could even be what I am, a gay man. My family was completely in the dark because of the guilt and shame that I was terrified would bring to them if they found out. If it had not been for two truly amazing people in my life, I’m not sure if I would be here today. Because of them I was able to start the healing process. Because of them, I am.

I am one of the fortunate ones that had someone find them in time to stop a tragedy from happening. I chose to share that story because this past month, CWO had the honor of having a Community Circle discussion lead by Kristina Mossgraber. Kristina is also a fellow peer and NAMI’s Director of Education & Community Outreach. She helped us explore the importance of being an advocate for someone who may be contemplating suicide and shared several tools and tips for those acting as a support system.

Kristina started the circle by sharing her own story of attempted suicide back in 2014. She and I are in agreement that our experiences could have been much different if we had someone along our journey that had said, “I’ve noticed you haven’t been yourself lately, are you thinking of suicide?” She shared that it is so often thought that addressing the poignant notion puts suicide in the persons’ mind. It does not. In fact, for many, being so directly addressed allows them the ability to reach out for the connection that they so deeply are looking for. She then handed out small business card-size tips and began to walk through them with those of us in attendance. The first consideration is to begin using “I” statements when speaking with someone and always to be non-judgmental.

Because we live in a society where there is still so much negative stigma and judgement tied to suicide, sometimes we may unwittingly seem to be disapproving or shaming when we are trying to help someone and we don’t know how. We may be completely unaware that there is any judgement in our tone when we are concerned, frightened and just want to be supportive. For example, we may say, “Are you thinking of committing suicide?” a phrase that many would not consider to be anything but “regular” or “normal” under the circumstances. Instead it creates a feeling that the act is a sin or is of evil doing and brings a stigma of shame and accusation with it in many ways. If we can change our language to no longer include “commit” and then “own” what we notice, it could hopefully change the narrative enough to allow the person we are concerned about to accept the support we are offering. Include the use of “I” statements like, “I’ve noticed you haven’t been yourself” or, “I want to understand so I can support you”, or “I’m asking because I care”.

Kristina continued to say that knowing that you have other tools available to you to help is also crucial when building one’s support toolbox. Having local crisis numbers and supports can allow you be ready if the situation moves beyond the aid that you are able provide. Tools like 211/Lifeline and the crisis text line (at 741741) are great tools for the Rochester area. We then discussed the importance of having a support system in place for the supporters as well. Being someone’s shoulder, confidant, listening ear, friend, voice of reason, or perspective changer can be an extremely tough and toll-taking endeavor. Just as it is important for you to know of the resources available for the person you are supporting, it is helpful to know your limitations and the resources you have so that you can take care of yourself.

One concern that resonated with most in attendance was wondering what could have been done differently to stop someone who died by suicide. The answer to this concern as discussed by the group was...ultimately nothing...the decision is always in the hands of the person who chooses to end their own life. As supporters, we can do our best to be there, use the available community resources we have and show that person that they are LOVED. It is important to know, it’s NOT our fault and there are also supports out there specific for us. This concern and the answer that it provided, while uncomfortable to discuss, reminds us of the reality of life and the immense need for selfcare as a supporter of someone contemplating suicide.

Here are some thoughts that were collected from peers who attended the Community Circle. *“It was really helpful to learn about how to best be supportive to others who might be struggling with suicidal thoughts and to learn about some good resources in our area.” “If I can help someone that helps me. I’m not the Lone Ranger!” “It just takes one person to be there – to get through to a person contemplating suicide. Tools to help – very necessary resources are available.” “Options R out there for help I never was aware of.” “It was wonderful to connect with my peers and share information and have a conversation about suicide prevention.”*

Be Well. - Khang



Table of Contents:

Page 2: Community Outreach
Calendar and Descriptions for CWO
Calendar and Buildout Letter for LSS

Life Skills Services



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
FIND WELLNESS

Announcing...

Academy of Peer Services Term 3

Every Tuesday

9:30am - Noon

Starting **8/27/2019**

at our newly
renovated space at
344 N. Goodman St.
Rochester, NY 14607

Register Early! Class Sizes Limited!

Call: 325-3145

CREATIVE WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES (CWO)

Coming soon!

Artist Bazaar

A Collaborative Art Exhibit &
Artist/Makers Market

Collaborative
Exhibit:
Nov. 1- Dec. 21, 2019

2nd Saturday Art Markets:
Nov. 9 & Dec. 14, 2019
10:30 am-2:00 pm

A gallery style exhibit and artist market
opportunity for CWO artists and makers to
display and sell their artwork and wares.

The circle gallery will feature a collective of
artists and two artist market days featuring
a variety of artwork, goods & wares.

Gallery and table space are on a first come first
serve basis. If you wish to participate,
applications will be available in September.
Please apply along with sample images via
email to the art coordinator.

CWO's ARTIST'S FELLOWSHIP Meeting

Share and provide constructive insights
on pieces of work that are still "works in
progress" or "completed"!

August 22nd @3:00

Mental Health Association's
Drop-In Center
539 South Avenue
Rochester, NY 14620
(585) 454-3530

*Need to talk to someone but your therapist's
office is closed?*

*It's not an emergency room situation yet, but if
you don't find someone to talk to it could be?*

The Drop-In Center may be just what
you need!

The Center is open seven (7) days a week
5:00PM - 9:00PM

No referral or appointment necessary.
SIMPLY DROP-IN!

Support is provided by individuals who have
overcome mental health concerns and now offer
support to others as they find their own path to
mental wellness.

#5 South Avenue Bus will bring
you right to our door at the
corner of South Avenue and
Hamilton Street.



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
FIND WELLNESS

MHA PEER COMMUNITY OUTREACH



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
FIND WELLNESS

Find Your True Self

Building Your Self-Esteem

A safe, caring, non-judgmental group to facilitate finding
and building ones' own voice both inside and out.

Out Alliance - 585-352-1077

100 College Ave #100, Rochester, NY 14607

Meeting every 1st & 3rd Mondays @ 6 - 7PM

Healthy Connections

A group that uses the 8 Dimensions of Wellness to build
and cultivate connections and strengthen ties.

Pinnacle Place Apartments - 585-442-9440

919 S. Clinton Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620

Every Thursday @ 9:45 - 11:15 AM