

# **A Death Like No Other: Dealing with the Aftermath of Suicide**

## **Supporting staff members after a patient suicide.**

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# Staff Involvement in Suicide Prevention

- **Suicide prevention** ~ everyone's business
- Health & social care staff working in **mental health services** are at high risk of **meeting someone who is suicidal**
- Suicide risk assessment & management ~ an **integral part of daily clinical practice**
- Department of Health ~ **National Suicide Prevention Strategy (2012)**
- **No Health Without Mental Health (2012)**
- World Health Organisation ~ **Suicide Prevention Strategy (2014)**

# Suicide in Mental Health Practice

- People experiencing **severe and enduring mental illness** are at a **higher risk** of dying by suicide (Joiner, 2007; Hawton & Van Heeringen, 2009)
- Some die by suicide **after having contact** with mental health services (Joiner, 2007; Appleby, 2013)
- **Suicide postvention** focuses mainly on relatives, friends, significant others and **less on** health & social care practitioners (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011)

# How are staff affected by a patient suicide?

Brief literature review revealed the following primary research studies:

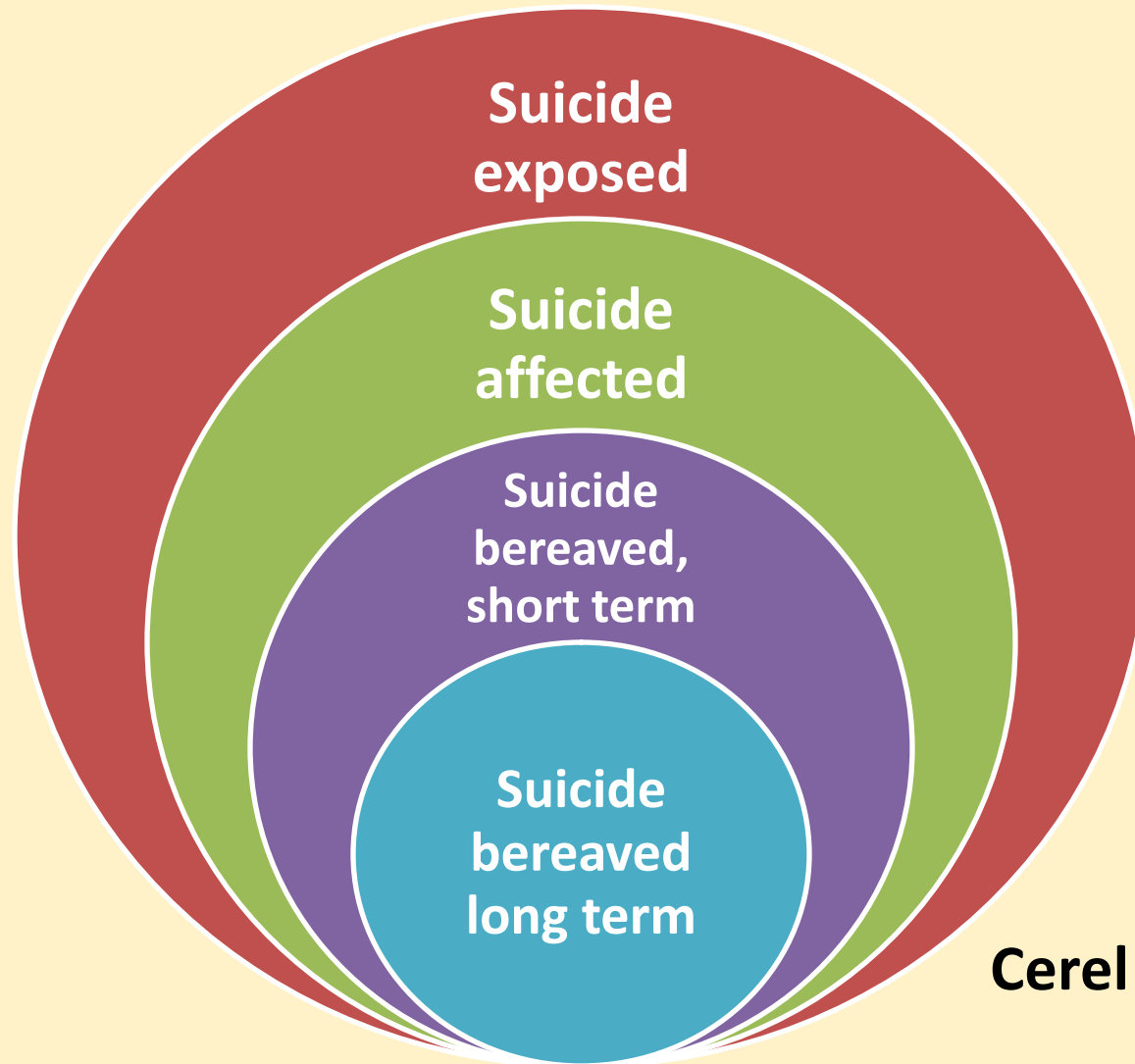
- **Psychiatrists** (Dewar et al, 2000; Landers, 2010; Scocco, 2012; Rothes et al, 2013)
- **Trainee psychiatrists** (Alexander et al, 2000; La Fayette & Stern, 2004)
- **Nurses** (Midence et al, (1996); Talseth et al (1997); Valente, (2003); Bohan & Doyle, (2008); Robertson, (2010); Takahashi et al, (2011; Canning & Gournay, 2014)
- **Social workers & allied health professionals** (Linke et al, 2002; Ting et al, 2008; Gulfi et al, 2010, Wurst et al, 2011, Wurst et al, 2013, Castelli Dransart, 2014)
- Evidence that a patient suicide **has a profound** personal & professional impact.
- May result in **moral distress** (Epstein & Delgado, 2010; Gallagher, 2011) or **post-traumatic growth** (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006)
- Patient suicide may be **seen as an occupational hazard...it comes with the territory.....** (Gulfi et al, 2010)

# What is a suicide survivor?



- Gutin et al (2011), state:  
  
“a suicide survivor is someone who experiences **high levels of self perceived psychological, physical and or social distress** after the suicide **regardless of the social relationship with the person**” (page 7).

# Continuum of Suicide Survivorship



**Cerel et al, 2014**

# Potential Types of Individuals in Categories of Suicide

Exposed	Affected	Suicide-Bereaved , Short Term	Suicide Bereaved, Long Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First responders</li> <li>▪ Anyone who discovers the decedent</li> <li>▪ Family members</li> <li>▪ <b>Therapists</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Clinicians</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Health care workers</b></li> <li>▪ Community members</li> <li>▪ School communities</li> <li>▪ Work place acquaintances</li> <li>▪ Fans of celebrities</li> <li>▪ Community groups. E.g. sporting clubs</li> <li>▪ Rural or close knit communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First responders</li> <li>▪ Anyone who discovers the decedent</li> <li>▪ Family members</li> <li>▪ <b>Therapists</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Clinicians</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Health &amp; social care workers</b></li> <li>▪ Close friends</li> <li>▪ Class mates</li> <li>▪ Co-workers</li> <li>▪ Team members</li> <li>▪ Neighbours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family members</li> <li>▪ <b>Therapists</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Clinicians</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Health &amp; social care workers</b></li> <li>▪ Friends</li> <li>▪ Close work colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family members</li> <li>▪ <b>Therapists</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Clinicians</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Health &amp; social care workers</b></li> <li>▪ Close friends</li> </ul>

# Suicide Postvention for Staff



- **Activities** that occur **after a suicidal event**, including a suicide **attempt** or a **completed** suicide.
- **Raise** suicide prevention, intervention **and** postvention awareness.
- Provide **opportunities** for **continued** education and training.

(Andriessen, 2009)

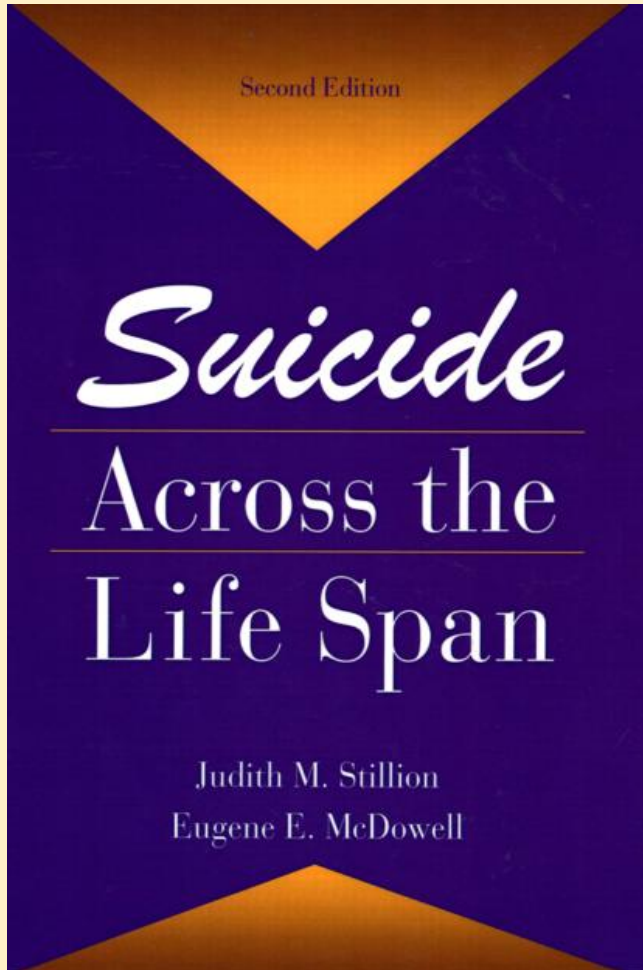


# How to support staff members after a patient suicide

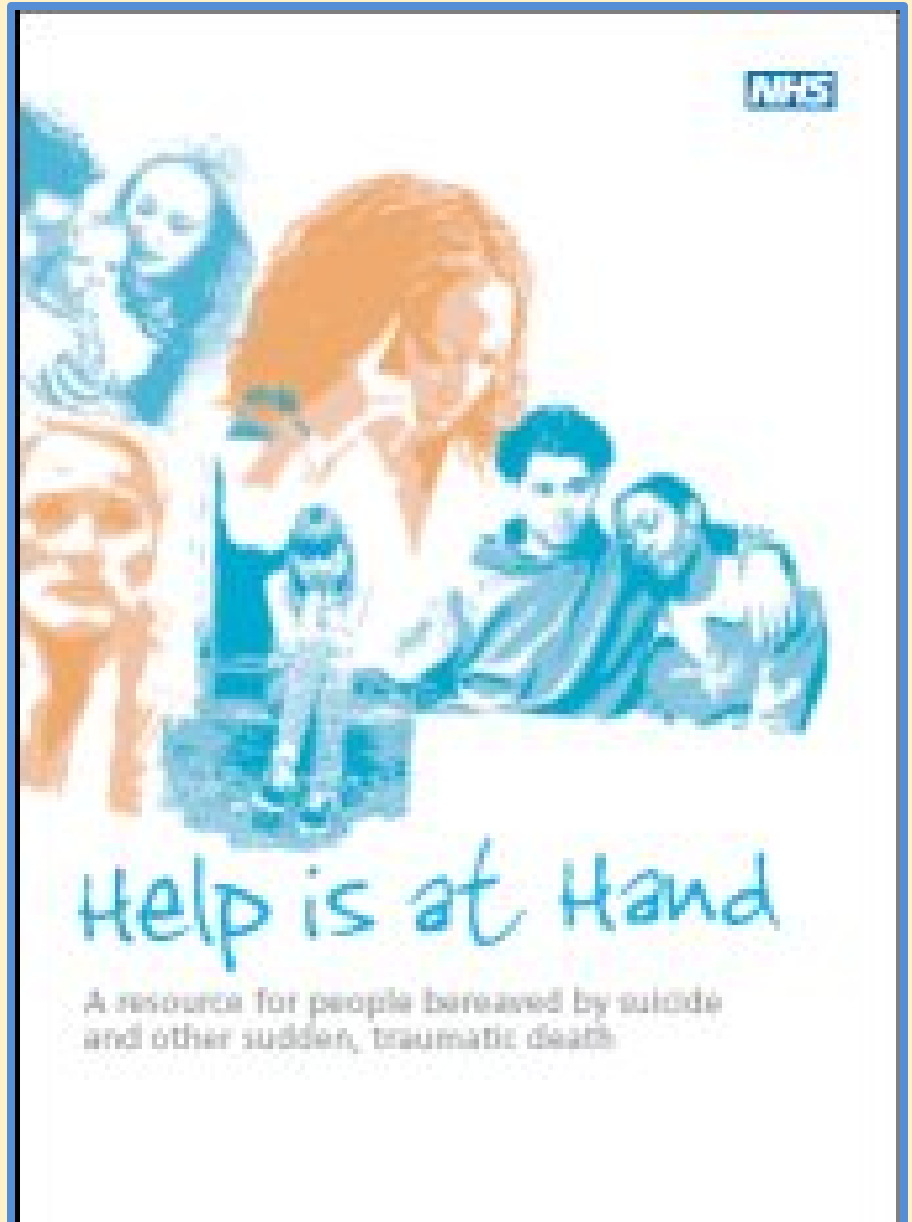
- Provide staff with information about **what to do** and **where to seek** emotional and psychological support.
- Provide opportunities for **debriefing** ~ individually or in groups.
- **Demystify** the **inquest process** and address **fear of blame, public humiliation, litigation** or **loss of employment** by providing information regarding the local NHS Trust Policy.
- Actively encourage **opportunities to promote closure** and **healing**. For example, being involved in bereavement rituals such as attending funerals, if appropriate
- **Sign-post to suicide bereavement resources.**

(Duffy & Ryan, 2005)

# Useful Resources

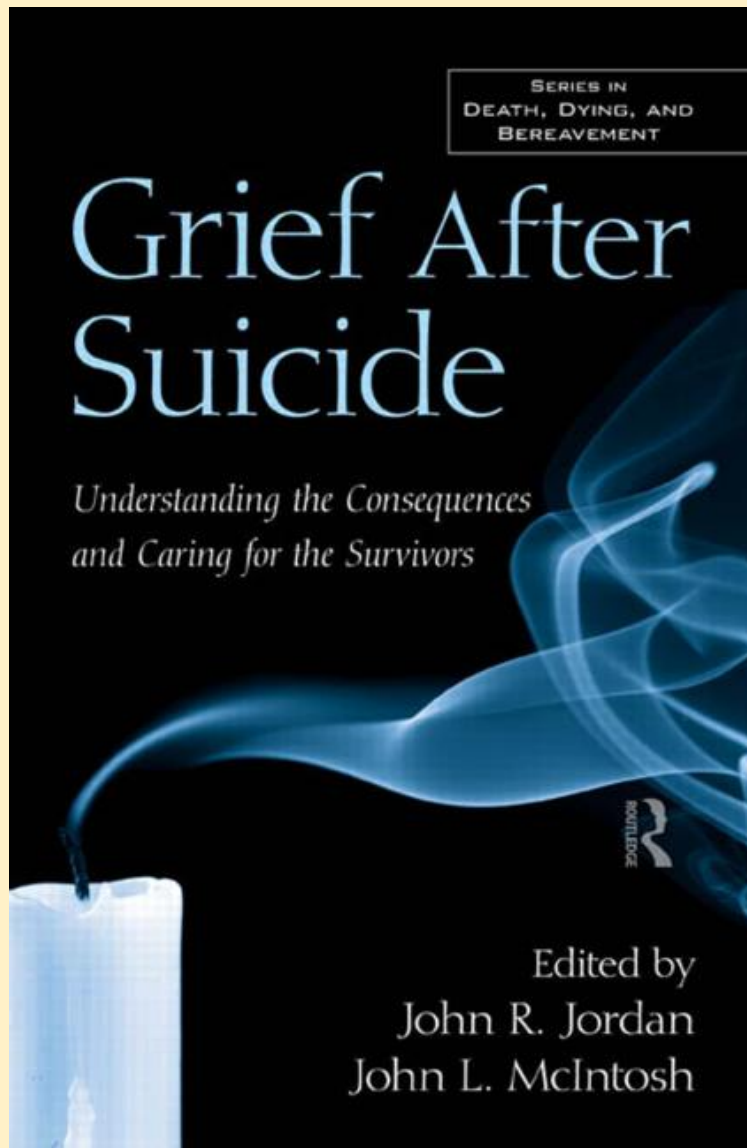


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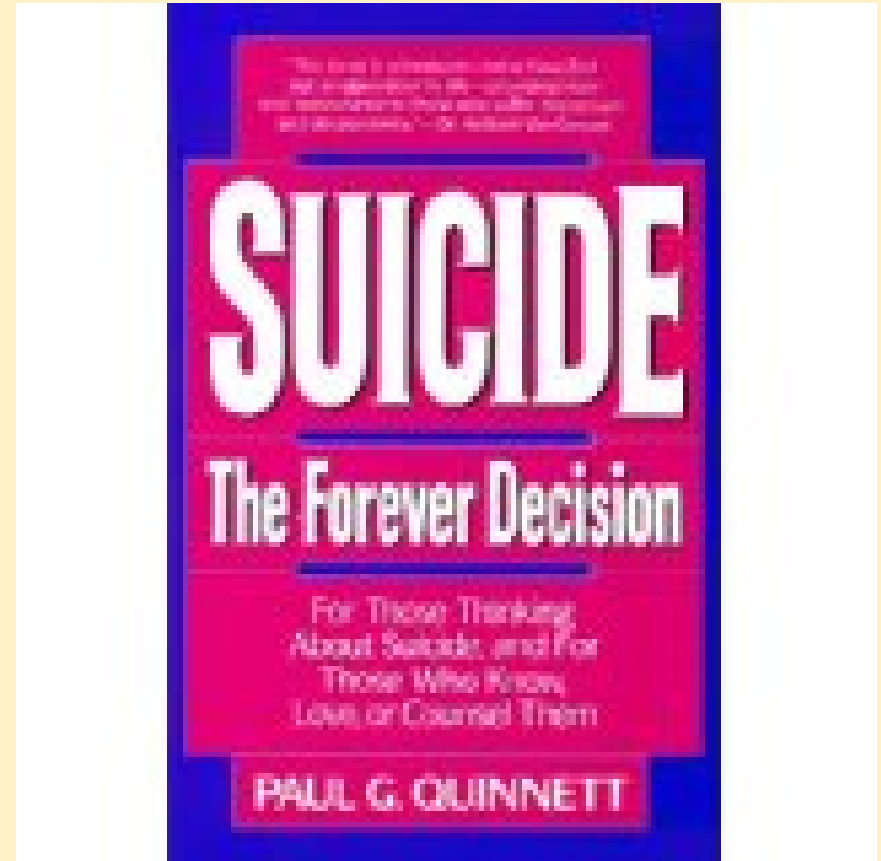
# Useful Resources



## International Association of Suicide Prevention

**\* Special interest  
group – available at:  
[http://iasp.info/post  
vention.php](http://iasp.info/postvention.php)**

# Dr. Paul Quinnett



**The Things Suicidal People Say –  
Suicide Warning Signs Revisited  
(2008)**



## Useful Resources

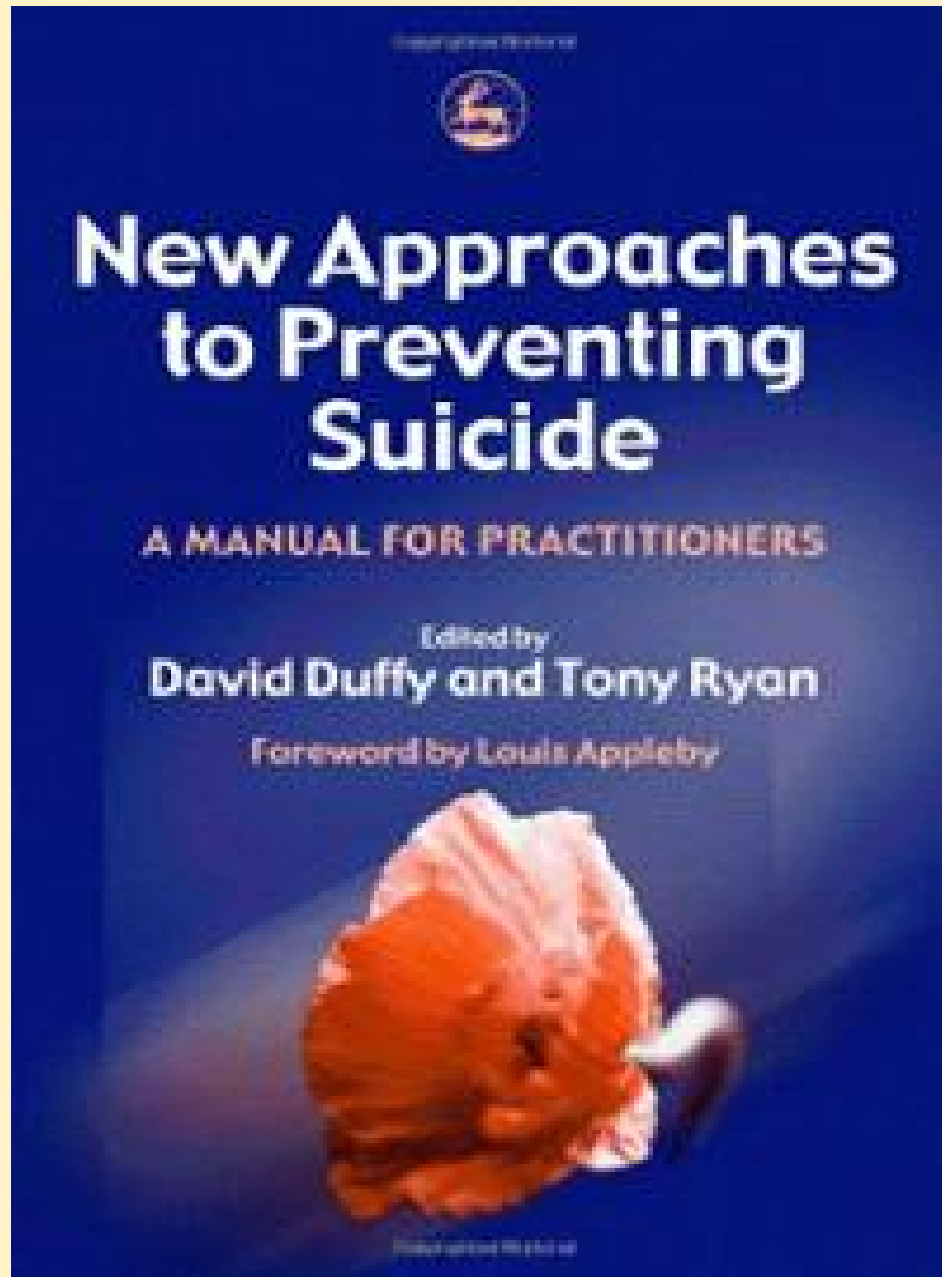
**“Question, Persuade &  
Refer “**

**Dr. Paul Quinnett (PhD)**

**Established 1995**

**<http://www.qprinstitute.com/index.html>**

[https://lh6.ggpht.com/eYmQnfD\\_G8zOdSWG1mJy0ACey57j6gPHDS42ASjxGMcONuyhW70kbHPd68NP0qIng=w300](https://lh6.ggpht.com/eYmQnfD_G8zOdSWG1mJy0ACey57j6gPHDS42ASjxGMcONuyhW70kbHPd68NP0qIng=w300)



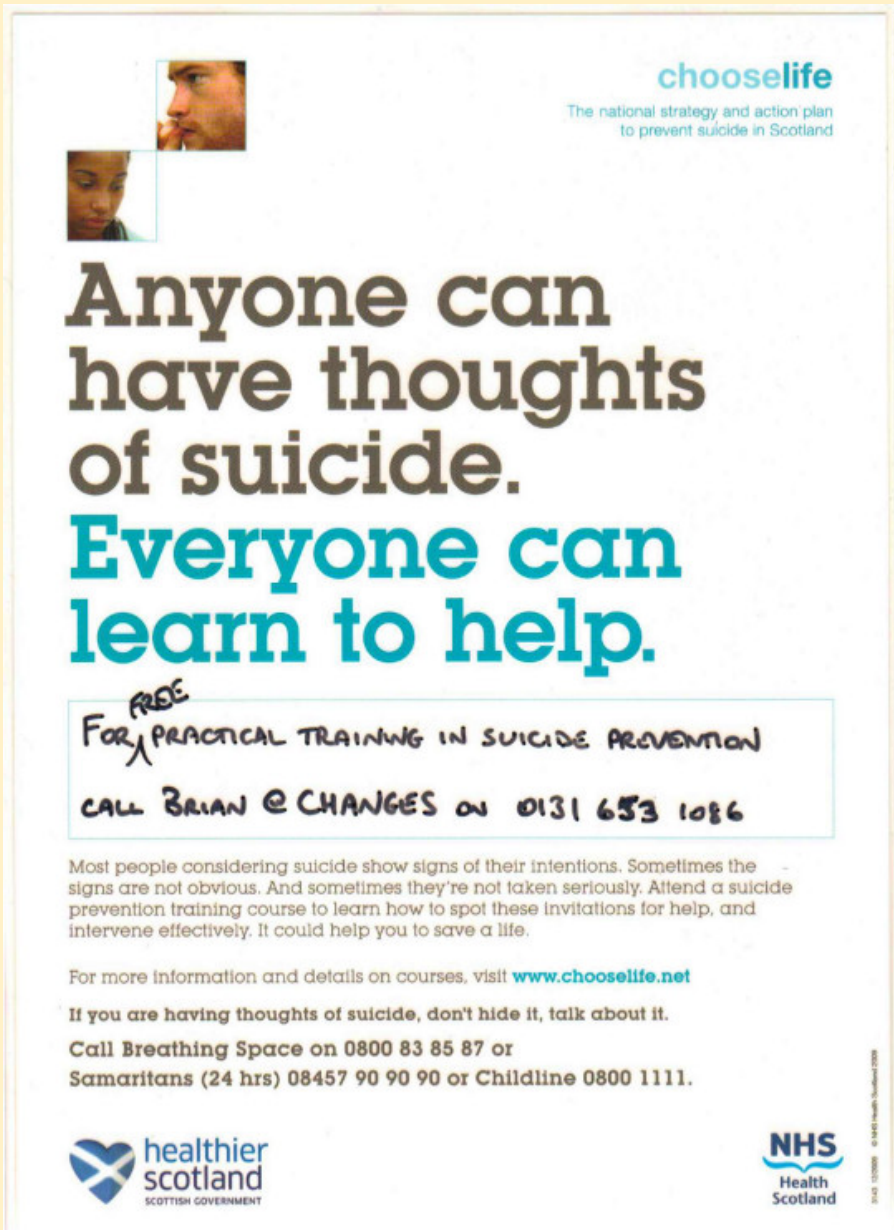
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<http://i43.tower.com/images/mm101972616/new-approaches-preventing-suicide-manual-for-practitioners-david-duffy-paperback-cover-art.jpg>



# Promote International Events



# Useful Resources



**chooselife**  
The national strategy and action plan  
to prevent suicide in Scotland





**Anyone can  
have thoughts  
of suicide.  
Everyone can  
learn to help.**

**FREE**  
FOR PRACTICAL TRAINING IN SUICIDE PREVENTION  
CALL BRIAN @ CHANGES ON 0131 653 1086

Most people considering suicide show signs of their intentions. Sometimes the signs are not obvious. And sometimes they're not taken seriously. Attend a suicide prevention training course to learn how to spot these invitations for help, and intervene effectively. It could help you to save a life.

For more information and details on courses, visit [www.chooselife.net](http://www.chooselife.net)

If you are having thoughts of suicide, don't hide it, talk about it.  
Call Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 87 or  
Samaritans (24 hrs) 08457 90 90 90 or Childline 0800 1111.



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Help prevent  
suicide



chooselife

[http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/media/image/h/3/choose\\_Life.gif](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/media/image/h/3/choose_Life.gif)





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