

The Alternatives to Suicide Approach

July 31, 2020 @ 2 PM EST | Virtual Training Workshop



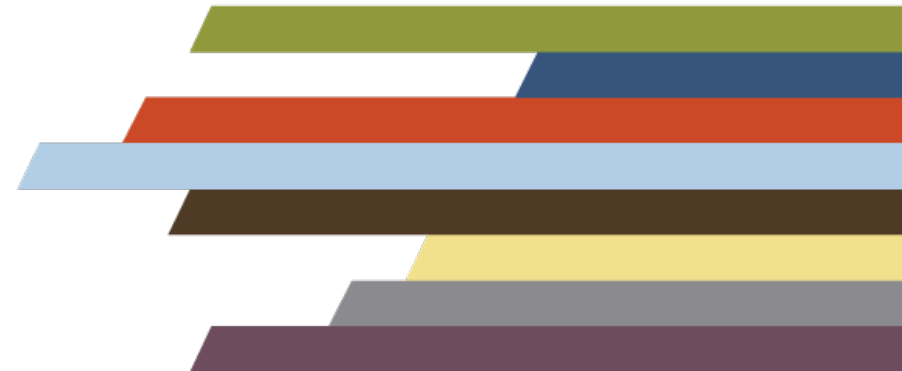
New England (HHS Region 1)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Caroline Mazel-Carlton
and Sean Donovan,
Western Mass RLC



Housekeeping Information



Participant microphones will be muted at entry – you will be able to unmute during the discussion portion of our webinar.



If you have questions during the webinar, please use the chat box or the “raise hand” feature during discussion to have your microphone unmuted.



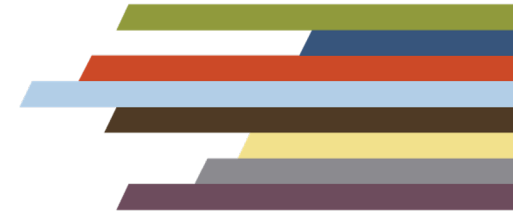
This session is being recorded and it will be available on the MHTTC website within 24 hours of the close of this presentation.



Information about CEUs will be sent in a follow-up e-mail



If you have questions after this session, please e-mail: newengland@mhttcnetwork.org.



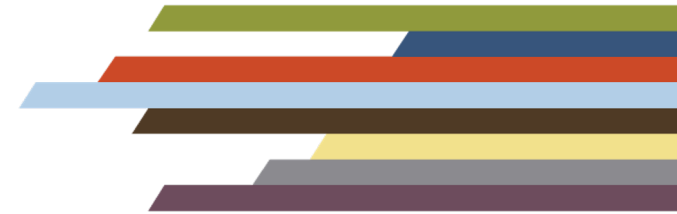


OUR TEAM

Yale Program for Recovery
and Community Health

in partnership with

C4 Innovations,
Harvard University
Department of Psychiatry,
and Center for Educational
Improvement

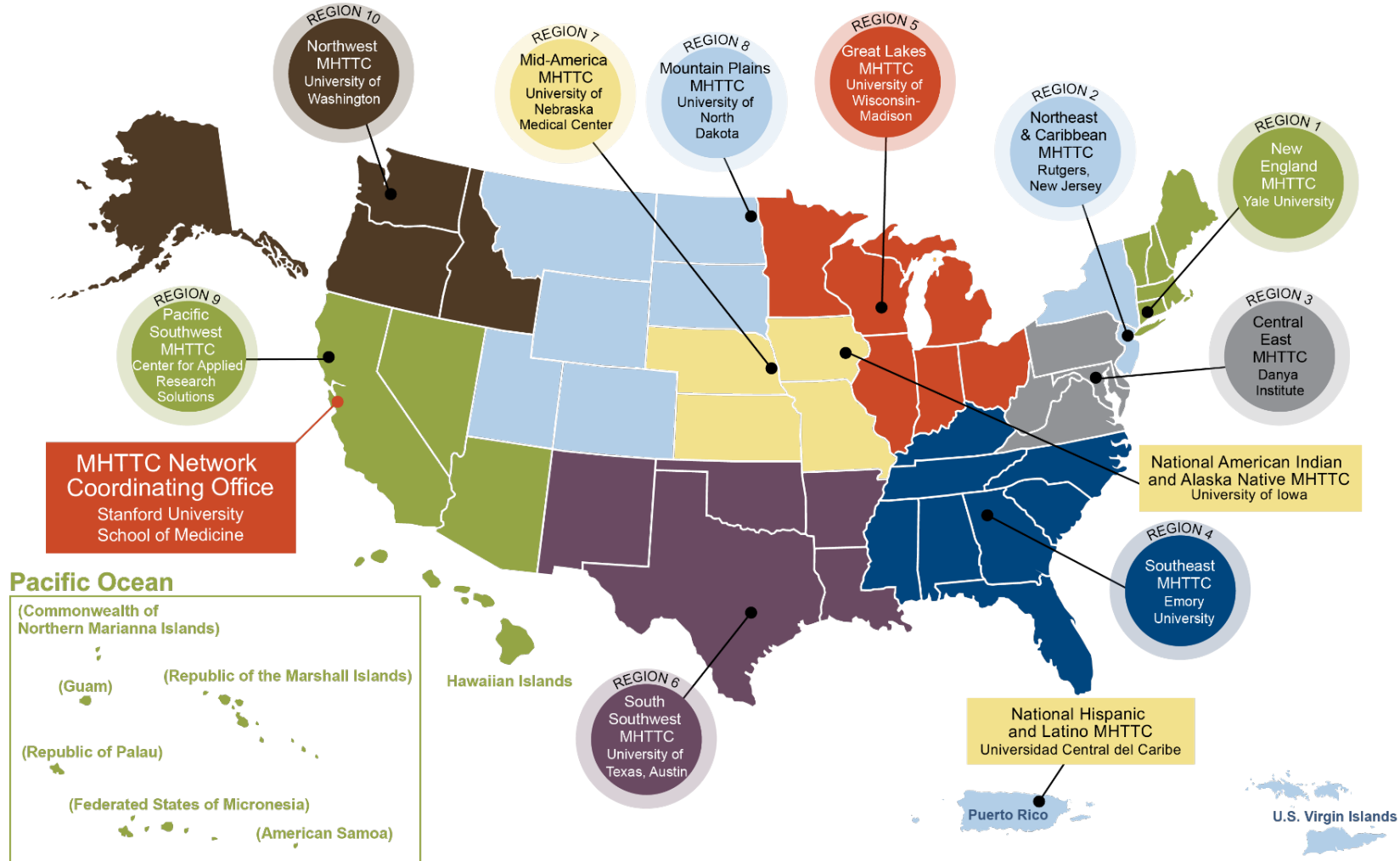




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MHTTC Network





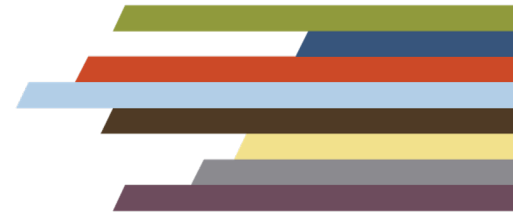
New England MHTTC

Mission

To use evidence-based means to disseminate evidence-based practices across the New England region.

Area of Focus

Recovery-Oriented Practices, including Recovery Support Services, within the Context of Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care.





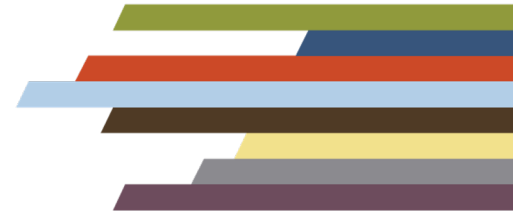
Ensuring Inclusion

To ensure the responsiveness of our work, we will actively develop and maintain a network of government officials, policy makers, system leaders, administrators, community stakeholders, providers, researchers, youth and adults, and family members from each of the six states to guide the New England MHTTC's activities.



Meet our Presenters

Caroline Mazel-Carlton
and Sean Donovan



Introductions



Alternatives to Suicide Groups

- Groups meet for 90 minutes in non-clinical settings
- Both facilitators openly identify with navigating suicidal thoughts or experiences
- First started meeting in 2008 and are funded by Tapestry Health (DPH) a program based in harm reduction
- Weekly groups meet throughout New England, as well as Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Ontario and both coasts of Australia



“Alternatives to Suicide” Approach

An Alternative to:

- Risk Assessment
- Diagnostics/Individual Pathology Framework
- Force / Coercion

Focuses on:

- Validation
- Curiosity
- Vulnerability
- Community

“Alt2Su” Prioritizes Dialogue Over Assessment

Clinical Risk Assessment tools can cause uncomfortable power dynamic and threaten authentic connection (i.e. people just give the answers that will avoid consequences they don't)



Instead of focusing on the
unpredictable “**IF**” (and putting
people in risk categories)

We get farther with exploring

WHY?

Instead of...

-
- *Do you have a plan?*
 - *Do you have means to carry it out?*
 - *Are they lethal means?*

Try...

- Do you want to talk about what's making life hard right now?
- Did something painful happen recently?
- Are you wanting to escape something in this world?
- Is there something you need to make life more liveable?

“Alt2Su” is Non-Pathologizing



SUICIDE

PROBLEM

CAUSE

CAUSE

CAUSE

CAUSE

PRESSURE TO BE
"SUCCESSFUL"

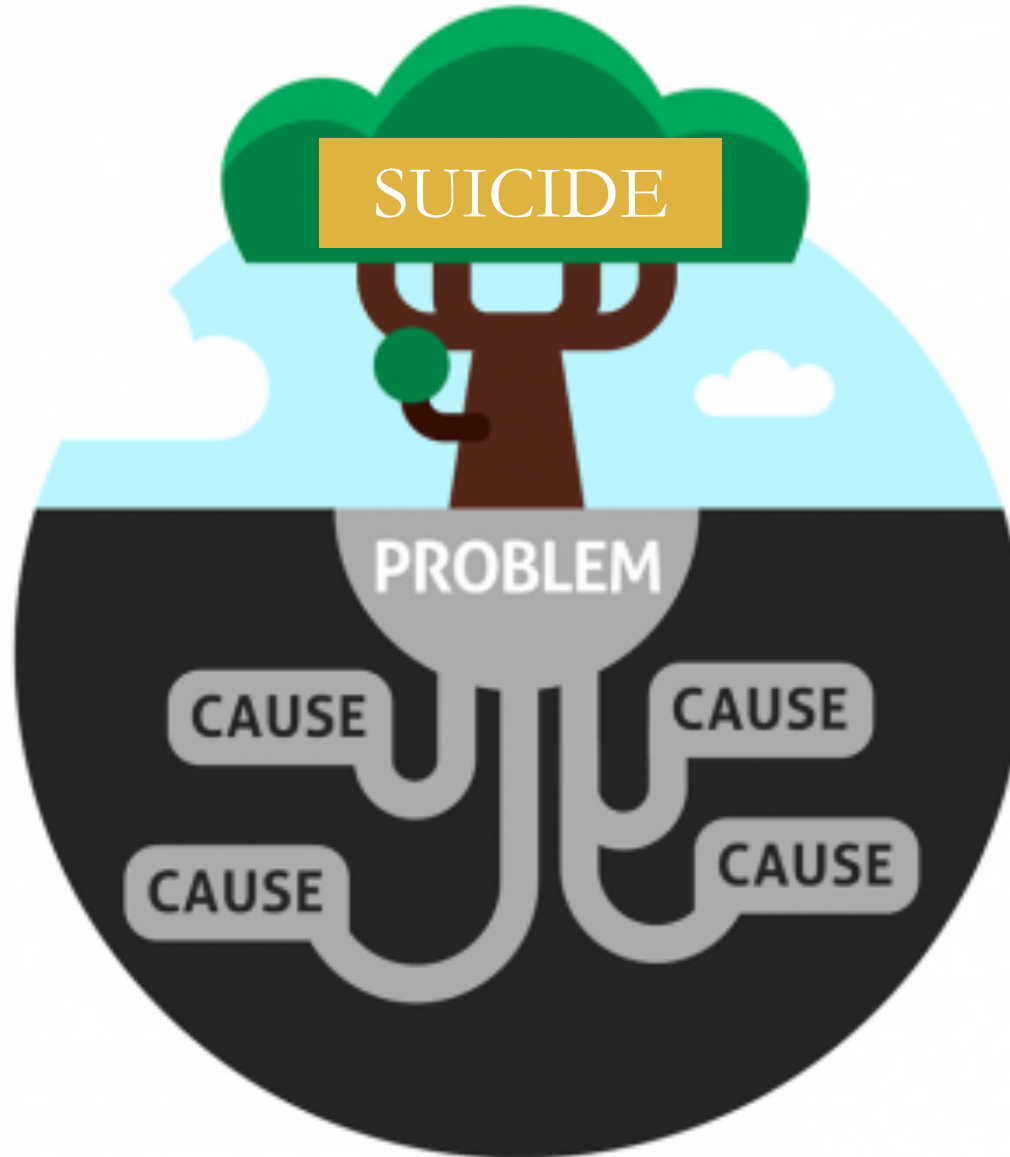
GENDER ROLES

HOUSING
STRUGGLES

STUDENT DEBT

SEXUAL ABUSE

SHAME



Instead of...

- *Did you take your meds today?*
- *It sounds like you are in a manic state right now.*
- *You have to remember that you are just like a diabetic.*
- *I am bipolar, too, so you should do what I did.*

Try...

- What are you feeling right now?
- It makes sense that you are feeling angry, sad, isolated.
- Are there times when this feels less heavy?
- I am here. I am listening. We can just sit in silence and cry if you need to.

“Alternatives to Suicide” is Non-Coercive and Avoids Force

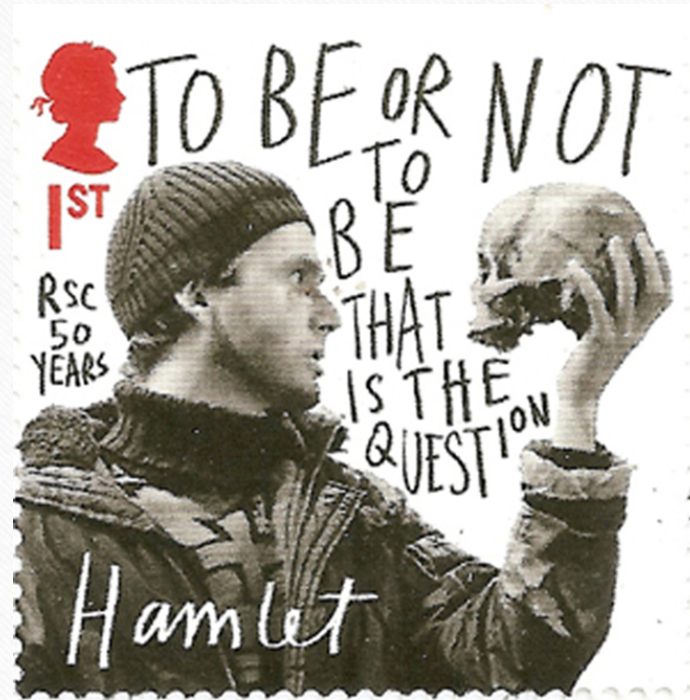
- We acknowledge institutional trauma and elevated suicide rates post-hospitalization.
- We let go of trying to control behavior. We instead focus on creating connection and authentic, trusting relationships.

Instead of...

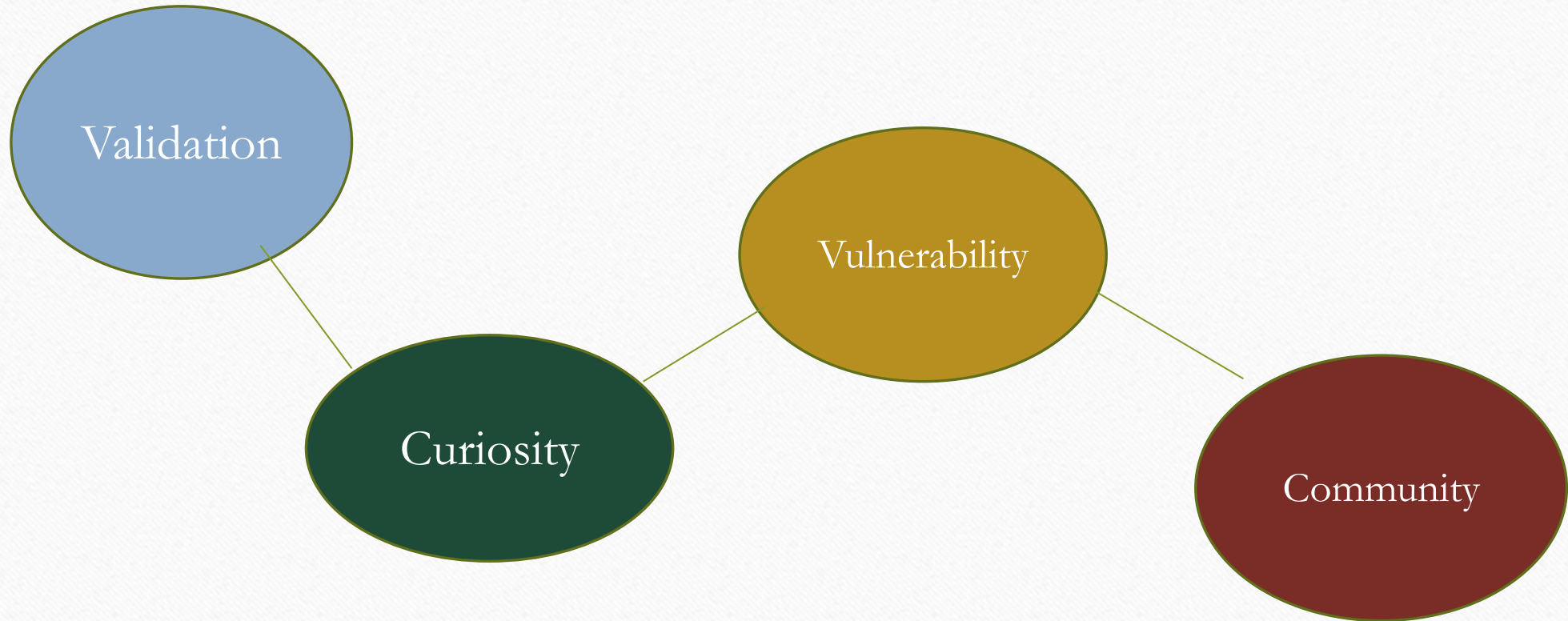
Try...

-
- *If you are feeling this way I need to call crisis.*
 - *It sounds like you are unsafe and need to go to the hospital.*
 - *Sounds like you are really overwhelmed. I am going to take over now.*
- Is there anyone we could reach out to together that would feel supportive?
 - What do you need to get through this?
 - I am feeling overwhelmed by a desire to fix this. How can I best be supportive for you right now?

Role Play



If CONNECTION is the DESTINATION... What is our Road Map?



Validation Builds Connection

- “That sounds really hard...”
- “It makes sense you are angry...”
- “I can see why you feel that way...”
- “I am so sorry that happened to you...”
- “Thanks so much for sharing that experience with me...”
 - “I have gone through something that sounds like that”.
- “It must be incredibly difficult to live in those circumstances”

Examples of Invalidating Responses

- “You’re being selfish.”
- “At least you are not....”
 - “That’s crazy.”
- “You have so much to live for.”
- “I know exactly how you feel”
- “But you were doing so well”
- “Did you take your meds today?”
- “You should try a raw food diet”

Curiosity



“What’s going on?”

“How long have you felt this way?”

“What are the things that have kept you going for so long?”

“Do you have any spiritual practices or cultural traditions that have helped you feel inspired or connected?”

“What has given your life meaning in the past?”

“Is there something that you need in your life to get through this?”

“What would you like your life to look like?”

“Can you name what you are feeling? Sad, fearful, angry?”

“Is there something you need to let go of... that needs to end in your life?”

“What makes you feel strong?”

“Are there any people or animals in your life you still feel close to?”



Just a handful of the many reasons and meanings...

Vulnerability

- Sharing some of your own experience... “I have felt really angry at the world too sometimes... it has made me want to end my life.”
- Being open and honest about your own emotional state... “I would feel sad if I never saw you again...” “I don’t know what to say right now...but I am here to listen.”
- This includes being honest about limitations ... “I want to be supportive but I will need to leave in half an hour... is there another person you trust to talk about this with?”

“Are there ever times when you don’t feel like dying? What are you doing in those moments?”

“Are there people in your life you still feel connected to? Is there anything that gives you a sense of purpose?”

Community



-Possibilities extend beyond “Alternatives to Suicide” groups: spiritual communities, social justice organizations, reading groups, listening to and/or making music, martial arts, yoga, etc.

“Are there things that you want to do before your life ends?”

VALIDATION	CURIOSITY	VULNERABILITY	COMMUNITY
It makes sense that...	What does that mean to you?	When something like that happened to me...	Do you know other people who've struggled with...
Thank you for trusting me...	What has kept you alive so far?	When I have felt really angry like that, I...	Have you asked anyone else about...
I'd be [feeling] too...	What happened around the time you started feeling that way?	I'm feeling afraid, but I want to be here with you...	Who are the people in your life that have helped in the past...
It's so wrong that... I am sorry that happened to you.	Are there things you want to do before you die?	I just want to be upfront that these limits exist...	Be a bridge, not a life raft...

VCVC in a Moment

“I’m grateful you shared this with me. And, this is also hard for me to hold alone with you. Are there any other supports or people in your life you might also share these thoughts with too?”



Contact Us

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Alt2Su Training Menu:

[http://www.westernmassrlc.org/
alternatives-to-suicide](http://www.westernmassrlc.org/alternatives-to-suicide)



Outreach, Outreach, Outreach



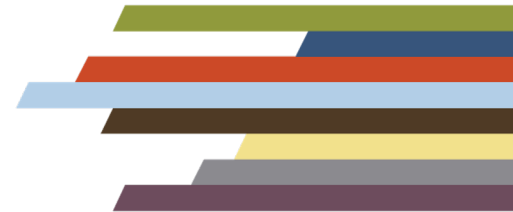
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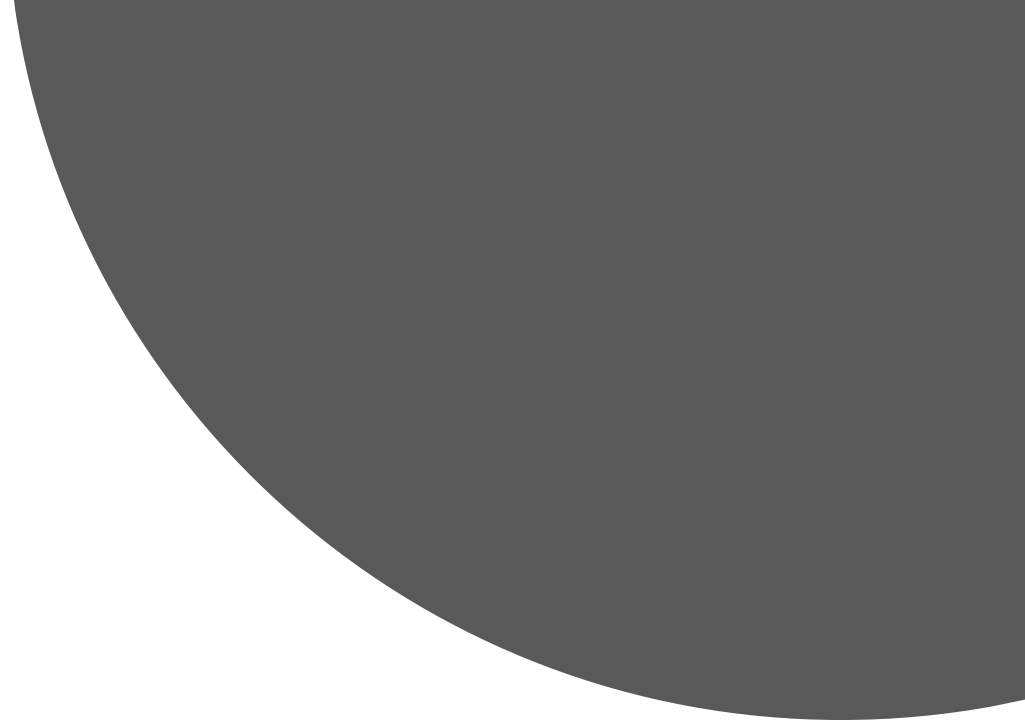
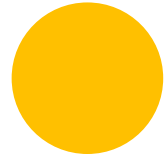
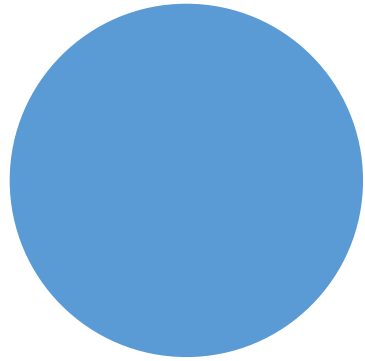
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