**Suicide Prevention Week Email 1: Exploring Protective Factors**

**Welcome to Suicide Prevention Week 2019!**

During Suicide Prevention Week thousands of individuals and organizations join together to support suicide prevention by engaging in a range of activities, from sharing on social media to hosting community events. The theme for this year’s Suicide Prevention Week Activation Kit is ***Finding Purpose- Taking Care of Ourselves and Others.*** This theme reflects both a focus on the power of protective factors, as well as the role we all play in preventing suicide.

* Visit and share the Suicide Prevention Activation Kit
* [Know the signs for suicide](https://www.suicideispreventable.org/), find the words, and reach out to someone you are concerned about.

[Protective factors](https://www.sprc.org/about-suicide/risk-protective-factors) are personal and environmental characteristics that help protect people from suicide. These include connectedness to family, community and social institutions, problem-solving and copying skills, access to effective behavioral health care, and a sense of purpose or meaning in life. Some protective factors begin early in life, others come into play at any point in the life span. It is important to work on strengthening protective factors for ourselves and those in our lives, throughout our lives, not just when we are experiencing thought of suicide.

**Gross National Happiness?**

In recent years the World Health Organization and other international bodies have increasingly focused on happiness as at least as important as more conventional economic measures to understanding how well a country is doing. The idea of “[gross national happiness](http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/)” recognizes that several holistic factors contribute to our well-being, from physical and mental health to a sense of belonging and purpose.

In 2012 the [World Happiness Report](https://www.earth.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/Sachs%20Writing/2012/World%20Happiness%20Report.pdf) found that despite great differences between countries, some common elements emerged that contribute to happiness:

* Having close relationships and social connections
* Helping others
* Good physical and mental health
* A sense of purpose in life

As most of us know from personal experience, happiness isn’t simple. Nevertheless, challenging ourselves to explore what activities give us joy, purpose and meaning is time well spent. Today, take one of these actions:

1. **Focus on what is going well.** We spend a lot of time examining problems; balance it out by acknowledging what is going right. Did you know that 40% of our happiness is determined by our daily activities? Dive deeper into the subject by registering for the University of California, Berkeley’s Greater Good Center’s free [Science of Happiness online course](https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/what_we_do/event/the_science_of_happiness) or watch their [short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=36&v=9cqm3d0Vg5c).
2. **Make a connection**. Spend some quality time with a friend and practice active listening. For some tips read the Each Mind Matters blog [From Small Talk to Real Talk.](https://www.eachmindmatters.org/ask-the-expert/small-talk-real-talk/)
3. **Check in with your health.** Take a walk, go on a hike, treat yourself to a yoga class, or spend 15 minutes a day practicing [Mindful Breathing](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing) – a resiliency building exercise to combat stress, anxiety and anger. If you have been putting off a doctor’s appointment, today is the day to prioritize this task.
4. **Do something for someone else.**  Look into volunteer opportunities or explore participating in intergenerational programs if they are offered in your community. If you are an animal lover, consider fostering a dog or cat. Do you know someone who has been struggling or is lonely? Send them a card, drop off a meal, or stop by and see how they are doing.
5. **Discover an inspiration.** Reflect on what makes you feel inspired – this can be an activity, a hobby, spending time with loved ones, or being part of a community or faith-based group. Once you’ve thought about what this may be -  go spend time doing that!
6. **Share a message of hope**. Check out our social media messages and share one or more with others! September 10th celebrates World Suicide Prevention Day. On September 10th, [Light a candle](https://www.iasp.info/wspd2019/light-a-candle/) near a window at 8pm to show your support, remember a lost loved one, and for the survivors of suicide. [Click here](https://www.iasp.info/wspd2019/light-a-candle/#postcard) to find e-cards or postcards in 62 languages.