

Connectiveness Matters

By Richard Egan



Positive and supportive social relationships and community connections can help buffer the effects of suicide risk factors in people's lives.

Social support and connections are the key protective factors to prevent suicides in our community. Programs and practices which promote social connectedness and supports are an element of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention.

This year I would like all of you to promote Connectiveness in activities you embark on and continue it throughout the year as the highest time of the year where we lose community members to suicide are spring time and September. We get more people help during the holidays because we have broken down some of the taboo and stigma of depression during the holidays.

Connectedness can include¹:

- Connectedness between individuals (e.g., friends, neighbors, co-workers)
- Connectedness among family members, remember this can be difficult as 75% of our Clark County community members came from somewhere else and hence family might be limited here in Clark County for some.
- Connectedness to community organizations (e.g., schools, faith communities)
- The connection of groups (e.g., minority groups) to their cultural traditions and history

Connectedness and support can be enhanced through social

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Strategic direction for the prevention of suicidal behavior: Promoting individual, family, and community connectedness to prevent suicidal behavior. Retrieved from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Strategic direction for the prevention of suicidal behavior: Promoting individual, family, and community connectedness to prevent suicidal behavior. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide_Strategic_Direction_Full_Version-a.pdf

programs directed at specific groups (such as older adults or LGBT youth), as well as through activities that support the development of positive and supportive communities.

Take Action

- Support the development of relationships between youth and positive adults in their lives (e.g., teachers, coaches).
- Build connections among co-workers, connect with individuals who might be isolating themselves.
- Help build positive attachments between families and organizations in the community (e.g., schools and tribal and faith-based organizations).
- Increase supportive connections in your social organizations.
- Create and sustain peer-delivered services and support groups.
- Implement activities in educational institutions that help students increase and strengthen their social networks and connections.

It's important to remember that not all social connections are healthy. Suicide prevention programs should promote practices leading to positive and supportive relationships.

You can learn more about the other elements of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention by going to: <https://www.sprc.org/effective-prevention/comprehensive-approach>

Richard Egan is the Southern Nevada Suicide Prevention Training and Outreach Facilitator for Division of Public and Behavioral Health with the Dept. of Health and Human Services. Throughout his career, Egan has provided leadership, supervision and suicide prevention for more than 700 people. He also spent 26 years in the U.S. Air Force, retiring with the rank of senior master sergeant.