FAMILY BASED APPROACHES
Suicide Prevention in Youth

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• Kathryn Krug is the Adult Behavioral Health Manager at Southern Indian Health Council in San Diego. Kathryn was born and raised in San Diego and identifies as mixed race. She was raised in an urban home by her Indigenous grandmother and Caucasian grandfather, following the death of her mother at the age of 6. Kathryn is a licensed marriage and family therapist who specializes in working with clients at the intersection of intergeneration and relational trauma and relationship. She holds a masters’ degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and is the president of the San Diego Chapter of California Marriage and Family Therapists Association.
Personal Dislosures

Cisgender
Female she/her
Married 12 years
2 boys 5 years old and 9 months old
Diagnosed with anxiety and depression in adolescence
Poetry / Music / Art / Fashion / Learning
Disclosure Statement

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Land Acknowledgment

Acknowledge that I am coming from Kumeyaay land today. I appreciate and respect this land. I appreciate and respect the people of the Kumeyaay Nation who have lived here for generations.
Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Recognize concepts and components of family structure and family dynamics in suicidal risk in youth
- List three practical family approaches for working with youth presenting with signs of suicidality
- Acquire new knowledge in understanding suicidality in youth within an American Indian and Alaska Native cultural context.
Family Systems and Structures

• Positive associations between family rituals and adolescents’ self-esteem, lovability, and identity integration – *(Malaquias et al 2015)*
• Marital and familial stability are associated with lower rate of suicide
• Bonding to significant others is a necessary step in the process of developing self-control / self-management
• Care being provided often does not work on the environment
  — Children who enter care are frequently from families who are disadvantaged economically, socially and emotionally. Such disadvantage often co-exists with other risk factors including a history of abuse as well as socio-cultural differences such as being from minority of an Indigenous background
• There is always an identified patient / sometimes the role of the child in the family is to be “sick” or in “trouble”
Common Misconceptions

• The fear that talking about suicide will make it happen
• The belief that suicidality is a cry for attention rather than a sign that a person seriously needs help
• The belief that people who are suicidal are just having a difficult time and that it will pass
• The belief that once a person has decided to end their life, there is no action their loved ones can take to stop them
• The belief that a person with children or strong family relationships would never actually end their life
Question for the Audience

How did you know your parent(s) were angry as a child?
Familial Risk Factors for Suicidality in Youth

• Depression related to parental and family factors of stability (parenting strategies and predictability)
• Anxiety related to family environment, relational victimization, negative interactions in best friendships, traumatic events in the past and temperament (self management)
• Poor relationships with peers can lead to internalizing problems
• Frequent exposure to community related trauma
Family Approaches to Mitigating Suicidality in Youth

- Increase caregiver parenting knowledge
- Increase caregiver confidence
  In parenting and in self
- Caregiving skills
  Parenting and colonized life culture
- Caregiver mental status
  Flexibility and adaptability
- Improve interpersonal connectedness within ind. family systems
- Family specific rituals
Family Rituals

• 3 Main Types
  Patterned daily interactions
  Upheld and sincerely held family traditions
  Family celebrations and non-celebrations

• Family rules
  spoken and unspoken

• Acceptable repercussions
Question for the Audience

• What are some family rituals or habits that your family uses to build community?
Cultural Interventions to help Families Mitigate Suicidality in Youth

- Increase connection to meaningful community
- Increase involvement in ceremony, meeting with elders and participating in cultural activities (dance/music)
- Increase intimacy
  - Connect client to their spiritual gaps – spiritual leaders and ceremonies
  - Identify level of cultural participation and connection
  - Identify support/family acceptance of suicidality
Community Based Family Supports to Mitigate Suicidality in Youth

- Indigenous Family Structure
  Extended Family Structure with all family involved in child rearing
- Community services availability
  services that are integrated into the tribal system
- Identify and support people at risk
- Create protective environments
  no shame no blame no fear
  peer based / non formal / knowledge and experience based
- Increased exposure to children in urban settings
  Bicultural Programs
For Calling the Spirit Back From Wandering the Earth in its Human Feet
Joy Harjo

Put down that bag of potato chips, that white bread, that bottle of pop.
Turn off that cellphone, computer, and remote control.
Open the door, then close it behind you.
Take a breath offered by friendly winds. They travel the earth gathering essences of plants to clean.
Give it back with gratitude.
If you sing it will give your spirit lift to fly to the stars’ ears and back.
Acknowledge this earth who has cared for you since you were a dream planting itself precisely within your parents’ desire.
Let your moccasin feet take you to the encampment of the guardians who have known you before time, who will be there after time. They sit before the fire that has been there without time.
Let the earth stabilize your postcolonial insecure jitters.
Be respectful of the small insects, birds and animal people who accompany you.
Ask their forgiveness for the harm we humans have brought down upon them.
Don’t worry.
The heart knows the way though there may be high-rises, interstates, checkpoints, armed soldiers, massacres, wars, and those who will despise you because they despise themselves.
The journey might take you a few hours, a day, a year, a few years, a hundred, a thousand or even more.
Watch your mind. Without training it might run away and leave your heart for the immense human feast set by the thieves of time.
Do not hold regrets.
When you find your way to the circle, to the fire kept burning by the keepers of your soul, you will be welcomed.
You must clean yourself with cedar, sage, or other healing plant.
Cut the ties you have to failure and shame.
Let go the pain you are holding in your mind, your shoulders, your heart, all the way to your feet. Let go the pain of your ancestors to make way for those who are heading in our direction.
Ask for forgiveness.
Call upon the help of those who love you. These helpers take many forms: animal, element, bird, angel, saint, stone, or ancestor.
Call your spirit back. It may be caught in corners and creases of shame, judgment, and human abuse.
You must call in a way that your spirit will want to return.
Speak to it as you would to a beloved child.
Welcome your spirit back from its wandering. It may return in pieces, in tatters. Gather them together.
They will be happy to be found after being lost for so long.
Your spirit will need to sleep awhile after it is bathed and given clean clothes.
Now you can have a party. Invite everyone you know who loves and supports you. Keep room for those who have no place else to go.
Make a giveaway, and remember, keep the speeches short.
Then, you must do this: help the next person find their way through the dark.
References


- Joy Harjo – Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings


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