

**TOPIC: Living With CRPS: Suicide Prevention**

September is National Suicide Prevention month.

World Suicide Prevention Day is September 10.

Living with any chronic illness is challenging, but living with CRPS/RSD and the uncertainty it brings means we are constantly adjusting to unpredictable circumstances. By trial and error we develop a toolbox to help us meet our every day challenges, but do we know what we would do in a crisis? Where can we get help for ourselves or a loved one?

People living with CRPS/RSD face many of the challenges identified as factors that can lead to a higher risk of suicide. As a support group facilitator, you may be in a position to recognize the warning signs. Talking about crisis management and suicide prevention empowers everyone to recognize risk factors and encourages proactive planning. Learning about suicide prevention can save a life.

*“Studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts. In fact, studies suggest the opposite: findings suggest acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal ideation.”<sup>1</sup>*

Practicing strategies for coping with the physical, mental, and emotional challenges of living with CRPS/RSD develops resilience. These include: every day activities that help reduce stress, setting goals that give you purpose, learning various ways to manage flares, and doing the things you love.

Building a strong support team of trusted individuals creates a safety net. Develop connections with family, friends, a support group, doctors, clergy, and therapists or counselors you can rely on in the event of a crisis. Identify ahead of time who you would call if you lost hope.

Getting to know your local crisis support center before you need them is also valuable. Call your local crisis line(s) to learn about the resources they offer ~ and keep their phone number handy. Crisis centers are not exclusively for emergencies. In most cases, the majority of their calls are people reaching out in times of isolation, pain, and depression. You don't need to be at your wits end to benefit from talking to them.

Having well rounded habits for everyday life that address our mental, physical, and emotional needs lays a ground work for mental health. Developing a tool box for flares means we won't have to panic when they hit. Planning ahead by knowing where to turn in the event of a crisis is like knowing how to reach the fire department in the case of a fire ~ you may never need to call them, but it is reassuring to know that they are there.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bethe1to.com/bethe1to-steps-evidence/>

**PREPARATION:**

- Review and select one or more of the resources below to share with your support group.
- Contact local crisis line(s) for information and to request a speaker for your meeting.
- If you don't have a speaker, share the video resource which addresses coping strategies for living with CRPS and what to do if someone you know is thinking about suicide.
- Write down a few questions to get the conversation started. Suggestions:
  - Q & A with speaker or responses to the video.
  - What strategies have you found helpful for managing stress?
  - What helps you prevent or manage flares?
  - What would you do if you were thinking about suicide?
  - What would you do if you were worried that a friend was thinking about suicide?
  - Have you overcome a crisis? How did you do it?

**RESOURCES:**

**Video**

“Living with Pain”

Jill Harkavy-Friedman, PhD, Vice President of Research

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

2014 RSDSA Educational Conference, Lafayette, Louisiana

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKBY56SHSIU>

Living with chronic pain is complicated.

- Takes mental energy
- Changes brain chemistry
- Affects immune system
- Challenges coping capacities
- Interferes with attention, memory, mental control

Be prepared by developing a toolbox for the challenges ahead.

- Get Involved – Build a support team.
- Pace yourself. Learn to pace yourself.
- Learn to prioritize and plan out your day.
- Set Goals and Action Plans.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Learn relaxation skills & keep relaxed.
- Keep as fit as you can. Stretching and Exercise.
- Keep a diary and track your progress.
- Have a set-back plan to fall back on.
- Team Work. Get involved with others.
- Keep it up. Put tools into practice.

### **Local and National Crisis Hotlines**

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Local Chapter Listing  
<https://afsp.org/our-work/chapters/>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK(8255).  
Connects the caller to a certified crisis center near where the call is placed.  
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/how-we-can-all-prevent-suicide/>  
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center  
<http://www.sprc.org/states>
- IMAlive - An Online Crisis Network  
[www.imalive.org](http://www.imalive.org)
- Facebook Crisis Support:  
<https://www.facebook.com/safety/wellbeing/suicideprevention>

### **Information about Suicide Prevention**

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
<https://afsp.org/our-work/education/talk-saves-lives-introduction-suicide-prevention/>
- Warning Signs, Risk Factors, Protective Factors  
<https://save.org/about-suicide/warning-signs-risk-factors-protective-factors/>
- Be the 1  
Five action steps for talking with someone who may be suicidal.  
<http://www.bethe1to.com/bethe1to-steps-evidence/>
- My 3  
A free app that helps people identify and contact their support network in a crisis.  
Includes a Safety Plan template and guide to lay out coping strategies and resources.  
<http://my3app.org/>  
[http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/Brown\\_StanleySafetyPlanTemplate.pdf](http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/Brown_StanleySafetyPlanTemplate.pdf)