

# Counseling & Testing News and Notes

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## Suicide Prevention and Awareness: Your Role in the Prevention of Suicides at ISU

*Hillary Locke, Psy.D.*

Suicide is a national concern that has been invading college campuses at an ever increasing rate, and Idaho State University is not immune. Every day it is estimated that 85 individuals commit suicide in the United States alone, and for every death by suicide there are 25 suicide attempts. Suicide has climbed to the third leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24, with ‘accidental deaths’ ranking second.

At ISU Counseling & Testing Service, we are on the front lines in terms of managing mental health crises and supporting mental wellness. Faculty, staff and students that we talk to are often surprised when they hear how vulnerable our community is to depression and other mental health concerns, with one individual stating, “I thought our campus was somehow buffered from all that.” The truth is that we are in a national, regional, and personal war against suicide with our focus on not only saving lives, but on ending stigma toward suicide and other mental health concerns. How are we supposed to prevent suicides when a majority of well-intentioned people do not recognize that this problem exists right here at ISU?

Interpersonal research on suicidal communications among significant others has shown that one of the most common responses of friends and family members to a threat of suicide is no response, even though 90% of people thinking about taking their lives have communicated their intentions to others. If you suspected that a friend was

suffering from pneumonia or a broken leg, you would most likely do something to intervene. Peoples’ response to a possible suicide crisis tends to be much more complicated, though it does not have to be. Most people have not been educated on the warning signs and symptoms of suicide, and therefore do not know what to look for when anticipating whether someone they know is at risk for suicide. Most people do not know how to talk to someone about suicide, and most people struggle with how to get help for someone that they feel could be at risk.

**March 3<sup>rd</sup> thru March 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**is**  
***Suicide Prevention and Awareness Week***  
**See Page 2 for related Campus Activities**

One common myth about suicide is the thinking that if I talk to the person about suicide, I might make him/her feel worse or, worse yet, I might put the idea in his/her head. This myth is simply not true. In fact, most individuals who attempt or complete suicide are ambivalent about the act of taking their own life up until the point that they attempt or complete suicide. Most individuals want desperately to be helped and saved from the pain, but in feeling trapped or stuck begin to think that suicide may be the only option. Most suicidal individuals enter that point in which they actually intend to take their own lives only briefly before the state of crisis is over.

Suicide can be stopped with basic training in the a) warning signs, b) ways to talk to a suicidal individual, and c) places to refer him/her for immediate help. While ISU Counseling and Testing Service will remain on the front lines of suicide prevention, it is essential that you educate yourself about the ways that you can help.

We are offering a certified suicide prevention training (Question, Persuade, Refer [QPR]) to all students, faculty, and staff. This 90-minute training is designed to help provide the critical skills necessary for non-mental health professionals when faced with a possible person/student of concern. QPR training is free to all faculty, staff, and students and includes information on:

- The problem of suicide nationally, regionally, and at ISU
- Common myths and facts associated with suicide
- Warning signs of suicide
- Tips for asking the suicide question
- Methods for persuading suicidal individuals to get help
- Ways of referring at risk people to local resources
- and time for Questions and Answers

We hope that you take advantage of this important and crucial training. In doing so you will learn that individuals who are at risk for suicide are not that different from someone in physical pain; although emotional pain can be harder to see if you're not looking.

For more information about QPR or ISU Counseling & Testing Services in general, contact Hillary Locke, Psy.D., at ISU Counseling and Testing Service (208-282-2130) or e-mail at [lockhill@isu.edu](mailto:lockhill@isu.edu). You can find information on how to sign-up for a QPR training on our website at <http://www.isu.edu/ctc/qpr.html>.

## Upcoming ISU Suicide Prevention & Awareness Week Events, 3/9 – 3/13:

### March 9: Campfire & Music Vigil on ISU Bartz Field, 7-9pm

(Directions: <http://www.isu.edu/websc/exports/isumap/printableISUcampusmap.pdf>)

This is an ISU Housing and Counseling & Testing event. Please e-mail Katie [kirkkati@isu.edu](mailto:kirkkati@isu.edu) or Jared [gardjare@isu.edu](mailto:gardjare@isu.edu) for more information.

Information on suicide facts and prevention will be available and counseling staff will be on-hand to answer questions. Refreshments, entertainment, & yellow ribbons provided to all. Come on out and help support the cause!

### March 10: Suicide Awareness & Prevention Booth Displays, 11:00am-12:30pm

#### Main Lobbies of Turner, Rendezvous, & Student Union Building

Come on up to one of our table displays and bring your questions about suicide. This is an ISU Counseling & Testing event. Information on suicide facts and prevention will be available and counseling staff will be on-hand to answer any questions. Contact Jared [gardjare@isu.edu](mailto:gardjare@isu.edu) for more information.

### March 10: Moving Suicide Prevention Project, 12:21pm

#### Main Lobbies of Turner, Rendezvous, & Student Union Building

Come out and watch a live piece of art in motion! We can't tell you more or else we will spoil the surprise! This is an ISU Housing Event. Information about how you can help to prevent suicides will be provided.

### March 11: Movie: *Wrist Cutters: A Love Story*, 5pm Bengal Theatre

*Wrist Cutters: A Love Story* sounds like a normal enough indie flick. Boy meets girl. Boy gets separated from girl. Boy goes on a road trip with friends to find girl and gains a new perspective on life. Except everybody's dead. Counselors will be available to answer questions. This is an ISU Housing Event. Contact Stephanie [benastep@isu.edu](mailto:benastep@isu.edu) if you need additional information. Information about how you can help to prevent suicides will be available.

### March 12: Change of Fortune, Anytime

#### Main offices around campus

Keep a look out for baskets of fortune cookies with information about suicide prevention tucked inside each cookie. This is an ISU Housing Event. Information about how you can help to prevent suicides will be available.

### March 13: Movie & Discussion: *The Bridge*, 6:30pm

#### Location: Student Union Building, Clearwater Room

Over the span of a year, director Eric Steel's cameras capture tormented souls attempting to commit suicide by leaping from San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. Through poignant interviews with family, friends and eyewitnesses, the film reveals a common thread of depression, despair and chronic mental illness. Counselors will be available to answer questions. This is an ISU Counseling & Testing event. Contact Jared [gardjare@isu.edu](mailto:gardjare@isu.edu) if you need additional information. Information about how you can help to prevent suicides will be available.

## Same Sex Attraction and Suicide

*Julie Thompson, LPC*

There are many factors that contribute to a person's potential risk for suicide. One population that has been overlooked in the past are those individuals that may define themselves as something other than heterosexual, whether that be gay, lesbian, bisexual or none of the above. The recent death of actor Heath Ledger leaves fans reflecting on his successful career in film. I believe it was his courageous performance in the Academy Award winning movie *Brokeback Mountain*, a story that challenged stereotypes about homosexuality, that most merits critical acclaim.

Imagine taking on this character as an actor, a macho Wyoming cowboy in the 50's caught up in a relationship with a gay cowboy, carrying on a homosexual affair despite his own inability to explain, accept or come to terms with his own homosexual yearnings. Marrying the girl of his dreams and fathering children, his compelling attraction for this other man is the force that ultimately destroys his life.

As a counselor I work with a number of individuals who are caught in the grey zone of sexuality. The idea that individuals are either straight or gay has been challenged by decades of research. We are complex entities. Sexual orientation, flanked by influences of morality and emotional expectation, is one of the more complicated personal characteristics to define, outside of what traditionally has been considered normal.

In the 1950's, Dr. Alfred Kinsey provided research that clearly demonstrated just how murky the waters are surrounding this topic. The research suggests that same sex attraction is a normal part of human development. Research has indicated that 30% of all males experience a period of same sex attraction between the ages of 16 and 55 (Kinsey, 1953). For many people these moments, phases or brief crushes pass. For others the attraction persists, leaving them to wrestle with how to

acknowledge their identity in terms of their sexuality.

Despite a marginal but increasing acceptance of homosexuality in some parts of the world, there are still significant obstacles facing gays and lesbians. Many risk losing family, friends, and religious affiliation. They are victims of hate crimes. They are exempted from vocations, like the military or the priesthood, and denied the adoption of children. They cannot enter into legally sanctioned unions or share insurance benefits. Why, then, would anyone feel safe exploring sexuality beyond the accepted boundaries of heterosexual coupling?

I have been painfully moved by my clients' disclosures of the torment they live with every day. Many describe getting to the point of considering suicide rather than having to face the reality of living an inauthentic life. I struggle with my own feelings of sadness when trying to imagine avenues that would make this process less painful for those involved. I attempt to appreciate the challenges individuals face in achieving sexual definition, a process that for most individuals requires no debate or anguish.

We will likely never fully understand what drives attraction as it relates to sexual orientation; however, as a counselor I hope to offer some sort of refuge through compassion, willingness to listen, and a desire to understand while being supportive of the choices individuals arrive at in their own efforts to find love and peace of mind.

### **Suicide Warning Signs.**

These things may indicate someone is thinking about suicide.

- A previous suicide attempt
- Current talk of suicide or making a plan
- Strong wish to die or a preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Signs of depression, such as moodiness, hopelessness, withdrawal
- Increased alcohol and/or other drug use
- Hinting at not being around in the future or saying good-bye

## Counseling Q&A

**Q:** What kind of counseling is available?

**A:** Counseling, Testing, and Career Services in Idaho Falls offers both personal counseling and couples counseling. We also offer career counseling, including career exploration, resume review, and mock job interviews. The Counseling and Testing Center and the Career Center in Pocatello offer the same types of services.

**Q:** Who are the counselors?

**A:** Our counselors have had training and experience specific to working with college students.

**Q:** How do I make an appointment?

**A:** Come to Counseling, Testing, and Career Services in Idaho Falls (Room 223, Bennion SUB), or to the Counseling and Testing Center (Gravelly Hall, Top Floor) in Pocatello between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm to schedule an appointment and fill out some paperwork that will acquaint the counselor with your specific needs. Students requiring immediate help can be seen on an emergency basis.

**Q:** If ongoing counseling is recommended, does that mean there is something wrong with me?

**A:** NO! The college years are an exciting but sometimes stressful time. Many students encounter situations that are challenging and confusing, or their usual ways of handling problems may not be working well. Everyone needs some extra help sometimes.

**Q:** Will anyone tell my professors that I am going to counseling?

**A:** No! Counseling records are not a part of your educational records. Only you can give consent for us to release any information about you. The information that you provide and your counseling records are strictly confidential within the limits of the law.

# Preparing for Career Fairs

Jordan Doman

It's hard to believe the time has come to start preparing for the Spring Career Fairs, but check your calendar because they are just around the corner. There will be a **Spring Career Fair in Pocatello on Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>** in the PSUB Ballroom, and a **College Majors and Graduate School Fair in Idaho Falls on Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>** in the BSUB Multi-Purpose room.

Career fairs provide students with one of the best ways to meet employers, network, and find job openings. Majors and Graduate School fairs provide students with an opportunity to see what degree and educational opportunities are available. It is important in these tough economic times to utilize all venues, such as these fairs, to meet your current or future employment needs. The Spring Career Fair on March 3<sup>rd</sup> will give you an opportunity to meet with employers that have job openings.

With some preparation and planning, students can make their visit to a career fair a valuable and successful venture. The Career Center has a few tips for how to make the career fairs a success for you. You could call them the "4 P's" to career fair success.

**Prepare:** Preparation is key. Take some time to meet with a career counselor to have your resume reviewed or to participate in a practice interview. It also proves beneficial to obtain from the Career Center a list of employers attending the fair so that you can research the companies that interest you most. Lastly, come prepared with a list of questions you want to ask employers at the fair.

**Plan:** Planning can make or break your day. Once you've conducted the research on companies that interest you, identify those you would like to meet with. Plan sufficient time to meet with those companies, but remain open-minded to other companies that may interest you once you arrive. Also, print off a number of copies of your resume, reference lists, and other documents that can be given to the representatives at the fair.

**Perform:** Performance on the day of the career fair is critical. Come to the fair prepared with the list of companies you intend on speaking with, as well as the documents you are going to hand out. Make sure you have the documents in a file folder or portfolio so that you may move around the room more easily. When introducing yourself, listen carefully for the representative's name, and speak clearly and concisely.

Showing confidence, enthusiasm, and a genuine interest will also leave a favorable impression with the representative. At the close of the interaction thank the representative for their time and information, and ask how and when you can contact them.

**Professionalism:** Help make your career fair experience a good one by dressing professionally the day of the fair. Employers are looking at everything when it comes to potential job candidates, and your appearance should not detract from your qualifications or abilities. Business professional is the suggested standard of dress for the fairs.

The Spring Career Fair will offer students the ability to search for upcoming vacancies, coordinate an opportunity to meet this year's on-campus recruiters prior to their recruiting date, and/or meet with employers offering internships or cooperative educational opportunities.

Don't wait until the last minute and realize that the career fair is tomorrow and you're not prepared to present your best self. Visit the Career Center in Room 440 of the Museum Building to get help with your preparation for ISU's next Career Fair.

## Goals for Attending a Career Fair

Why should you attend your local career or job fair? There are any number of goals for attending a career fair, depending on where you are in the job-search cycle:

- **Networking:** One of the key benefits of attending a career fair is meeting new people -- recruiters, other job-seekers, career professionals -- to add to your network of contacts.
- **Jobs Locally:** Most job fairs are designed to gather candidates for positions within the geographic region of the fair, so employers are searching for qualified local job-seekers.
- **Jobs Long-Distance:** Even if you are thinking of relocating, it makes sense to meet with recruiters of national firms who can pass your contact information on to recruiters in other parts of the country.
- **Internships:** For college students, of course, this goal is the most common for attending a career fair -- to establish contacts to obtain an internship for an upcoming semester or summer.
- **Gain Experience:** Even if you are not currently in the job market, there is nothing like gaining valuable experience in mastering the art of working job fairs, especially if you are typically shy. The more experience, the more confident you are when it really matters.

ISU in Pocatello  
**Career Fair**  
 March 3<sup>rd</sup>  
 9:00 am – 3:00 pm  
 Pond Student Union Building

ISU in Idaho Falls  
**College Majors and Graduate School Fair**  
 Over 40 Majors Represented!  
 March 18<sup>th</sup>  
 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm  
 BSUB Multi-Purpose Room