



24-hour Crisis Intervention Hotline  
and ONLINE Crisis Counseling Service

# CONNECTIONS

Response of Suffolk County's E-Newsletter

June 2009

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**(631) 751-7500**

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## Letter From the Director:

Spring and summer can be unbearably cruel for many. This is hard for most of us to imagine as it is typically experienced as a time of renewal and rejuvenation – when we can go outdoors and see the beauty of the world around us coming alive again. However, it is the time of year when, statistically there are the most number of suicides as people who are suffering seem to feel their suffering more keenly. This reality combined with the continuing economic crisis bearing down on all of us has led to an increase in numbers of people reaching out to us during the first few months of this year.

We are fortunate to be welcoming a new group of trainee's to our Hotline and Support Line this Spring who have completed our recent training and are now filling much needed volunteer shifts. So, while we see an increased need for our services, we are working hard to meet that need with an infusion of new counselors. As Summer begins, we will be taking time to thank and nurture our wonderful volunteers with fun and interesting training opportunities. At the same time, we will be planning for our next training scheduled to take place this Fall.

Thank you to all our friends and supporters and my wish is that all of us can take time to nurture ourselves and those we love during these stressful times.

*Meryl Cassidy*, Executive Director

## The Benefits of Benevolence By Stephen Post, PhD

The connection between living a loving and generous life, and living a happier and healthier life, has been central to my work on how goodness and ethics impacts us biologically for several decades. With each passing year, I see this work catching on.

There is a striking amount of evidence to support the hypothesis that benevolent emotions, attitudes, and actions centered on the good of others contribute to the giver's happiness, health, and even longevity (see [www.whygoodthingshappen.com](http://www.whygoodthingshappen.com)). Although benevolence is chiefly about the well-being of recipients, it generally also nourishes the giver. Researchers in the social sciences and health outcomes look for a convergence of results across a variety of methods in order to determine the truth of any hypothesis. The evidence that "doing unto others" is good for the giver has reached a high threshold with regard to everyday kindness and good deeds that bestow upon the giver a feeling of meaning, buoyancy, and warmth, as well as a high probability of better health (see Post, ed., *Altruism and Health*. Oxford University Press, 2007).

An entire new literature has emerged to underscore how caring actions, volunteering, and positive emotional states like compassionate love, gratitude, and hope have benefits on psychological and physical health. These topics are central to the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University (see <http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/bioethics/>).

**Stephen G. Post** is Professor of Preventive Medicine and Director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University. He was previously (1988–2008) Professor of Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Family Medicine in the School of Medicine, Case Western Reserve University, and Senior Research Scholar at the Becket Institute of St. Hugh's College, Oxford University.

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## Volunteer Crisis Counselor Training Program

Response's Fall training program for volunteer telephone crisis counselors will be held on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, & 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Part one of our free training will be held at the Wang Center at Stony Brook University, and will include lecture, role-playing exercises, and private and group supervision. No experience is necessary, only a sincere willingness to learn and grow, and the ability to make a six-month commitment of 4 hours a week is required.

Response provides two types of telephone assistance lines and both are heavily dependent on volunteer talent. The crisis intervention hotline takes over 12,000 calls each year about a wide range of subjects – substance abuse, domestic violence, depression, family conflict, grief, and suicidal thoughts among many others. The support line provides over 2,000 telephone "visits" yearly to individuals who are homebound or have limited social support due to a physical disability or mental illness. College credit is available and bilingual volunteers are especially needed. Join us and make a difference – one phone call at a time! For more information, visit us at [www.ResponseHotline.org](http://www.ResponseHotline.org).

## Talking About Suicide

A number of stories in the media have highlighted tragic suicide deaths in the context of the current financial crisis. Although it is true that such stressors can precede a suicide, reports that blame a suicide on a single negative event fail to acknowledge that suicidal behavior is complex and often the result of several risk factors, including underlying mental health problems, which may not be readily evident. In fact, according to the American Association of Suicidology, more than 90% of completed suicides had one or more mental disorders, most often depression.

Instead of oversimplifying the cause of recent suicides when facts are limited, let's take the opportunity to educate the public about the warning signs of suicide and the symptoms of depression, and provide information on how and where to seek help if they or someone they know is in crisis.

It's important to remember to always include in our dialogue about suicide that:

- Many suicides are associated with mental illness or substance abuse
- Depression is a treatable public health problem
- Community resources like Response Hotline (631-751-7500) are available to help if you are in emotional crisis or concerned about a friend or loved one

## How Can You Remember The Warning Signs of Suicide?

### IS PATH WARM?

<b>I</b>	Ideation
<b>S</b>	Substance Abuse
<b>P</b>	Purposelessness
<b>A</b>	Anxiety
<b>T</b>	Trapped
<b>H</b>	Hopelessness
<b>W</b>	Withdrawal
<b>A</b>	Anger
<b>R</b>	Recklessness
<b>M</b>	Mood Changes

For information on how to help someone who may be suicidal, please visit our website at [www.ResponseHotline.org](http://www.ResponseHotline.org)

## Did you know...

Development Corporation of Long Island offers free help and guidance on ways to avoid foreclosure. It could make the difference between keeping your home and being forced out of it.

For more information visit [www.cdcli.org](http://www.cdcli.org) or call (631) 471-1215 x158

## Summer Help Is Just a Click Away!

Since many young adults today often go to the Internet community to seek support and understanding, Response of Suffolk County offers an online counseling program, called Hear2Help. As we enter into the summer months, Hear2Help may be especially helpful to those who won't have access to friends and school support that are usually available during the academic year. Knowing where to turn for help is often a challenge in itself.



In addition, Hear2Help counselors are available to anyone who is concerned about the well being of a loved one. Many people observe signs of depression in relatives, friends, or coworkers but are unsure of how to be helpful. Sometimes they are worried that a loved one is considering suicide and they need support in approaching him or her. Hear2Help counselors offer assistance, referrals, and all the time callers need to explore various options.

Hear2Help online counselors can be reached Monday through Friday, 3 – 9 pm, through its website at [www.ResponseHotline.org](http://www.ResponseHotline.org). A downloadable Hear2Help color poster is also available online at [www.ResponseHotline.org](http://www.ResponseHotline.org). Click on Media Kit and scroll to the bottom of the page for the link. Response hotline can be reached day and night at (631) 751-7500.



## Free Safe Summer Youth Programs

Featuring live bands at Cedar Beach, as well as sports and special events at South Country and Smith Point Park, the Safe Summer Outreach Program provides a safe, drug and alcohol free area for youth 13-20 to socialize during the course of the summer. The program is a collaborative effort between the Town of Brookhaven, the Suffolk County Police Department, North Shore Youth Council, and local community groups working together to provide safe activities for youth. [Click here for more information!](#)



## Useful Government Resources Online

The Too Smart To Start Web site helps help youth, families, educators, and communities prevent underage alcohol use and its related problems. It provides useful programs and strategies, downloadable materials, interactive games and exercises, and other resources to support you in responding to The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking. <http://toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov>

StopAlcoholAbuse.Gov is a comprehensive portal of Federal resources for information on underage drinking and ideas for combating this issue. People interested in underage drinking prevention—including parents, educators, community-based organizations, and youth—will find a wealth of valuable information here. <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/>

## Thank You For Your Support!

Response of Suffolk County would like to thank Legislators Kathy Browning, Jack Eddington, and Vivian Vilorio-Fisher, and Assemblywoman Patricia Eddington and Assemblyman Steve Englebright for their financial support! [Click here](#) to see what they had to say about Response.



Response of Suffolk County, Inc. is a nationally accredited nonprofit that has provided a crisis intervention/suicide prevention hotline for over 35 years. Response also offers an online crisis counseling program, a support line that makes telephone "visits" to homebound individuals, and a community outreach program that provides presentations to teens, teachers, mental health professionals, and many others.