

Father of suicide victim & SPEAK Task Force member calls for broader focus on mental illness

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HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – The topic of suicide has been making international headlines lately. Sadly, many people felt there was no other alternative.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's most recent statistics from 2015, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 15-34.

One man, who lost his son to suicide, feels like the focus should be broader. Daniel Adamek shared his story with WHNT NEWS 19 in an effort to help others better understand the challenges associated with mental illness. In 2013, Adamek suffered a serious loss.



“The loss of my son almost four years ago to suicide right before his 16th birthday,” explains Adamek.



Daniel Adamek's son, Christian, took his own life at the age of 15.

His grief guided him to action.

“I made that decision actually on the way to his funeral,” says Adamek.

A decision to create Little Orange Fish. The non-profit organization's mission is simple, but daunting.

“The greatest part of the mission is cultural change,” shares Adamek. “It's to change the mindset that there is some distinction between mental and phy There is no way to separate mind and body. They are inextricably linked.”

In addition to his work with Little Orange Fish, Adamek recently joined forces with SPEAK, which stands for Suicide, Prevention, Empowerment, Awareness, and Knowledge. He's on the task force for the initiative, which is a joint effort by the Huntsville Hospital Foundation and Huntsville Hospital to increase awareness about suicide in north Alabama.

“We have to get that cultural change where we recognize that mental health is everybody's issue,” says Adamek.

The group is working to change the conversation, build empathy and empower parents and the public to overcome denial and get help.

“I think we need to build on that and really start to look at what's working and what's not working,” says Adamek. “So we don't have to try to make people losing somebody to get them engaged in this conversation. If you've got a concern and you think there's somebody that might need help, we should be in a place where we can ask for that help.”

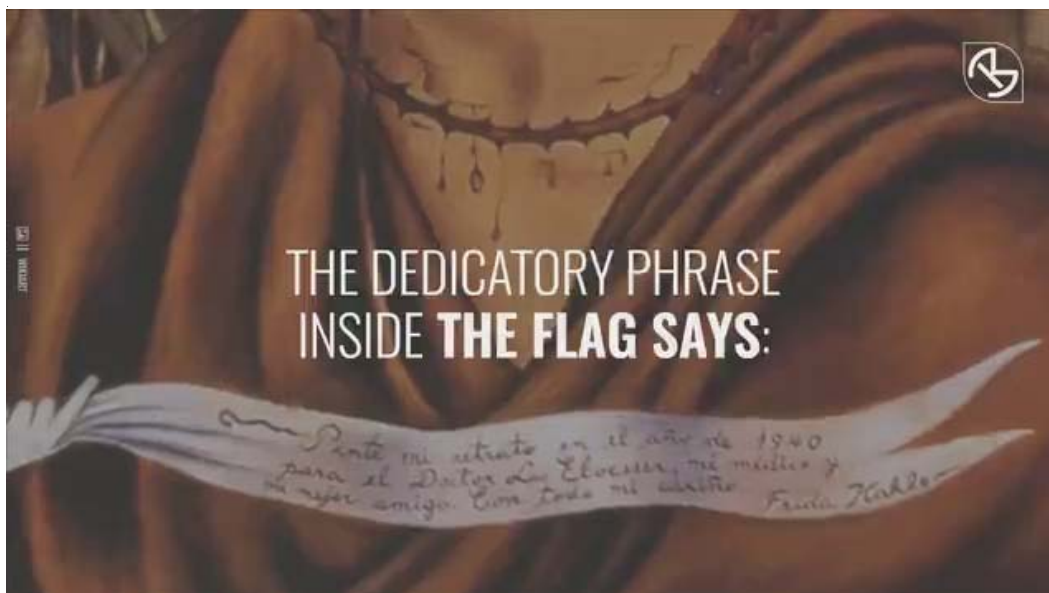
Suicide can affect any age group, ethnicity or race. It has nothing to do with your income or education. According to the most recent statistics, it's taken women and children every year at a higher rate in Alabama than the rest of the country. There's a new resource available that's free and at your fingertip you need it. WHNT NEWS 19's Clarissa McClain shows you around the SPEAK suicide prevention app.

SPEAK Suicide Prevention App Demonstration



WHNT News 19 and iHeartMedia are the media partners for this project, sponsored by the Huntsville Hospital Foundation. We are Taking Action to make sure especially children, in our community get the resources and help they need. Over the coming year, we'll be bringing you special reports and are committed to do to end the stigma associated with suicide.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours a day. Call 1-800-273-8255 if you need to speak to someone. You can also access the Lifeline 24/7 online.



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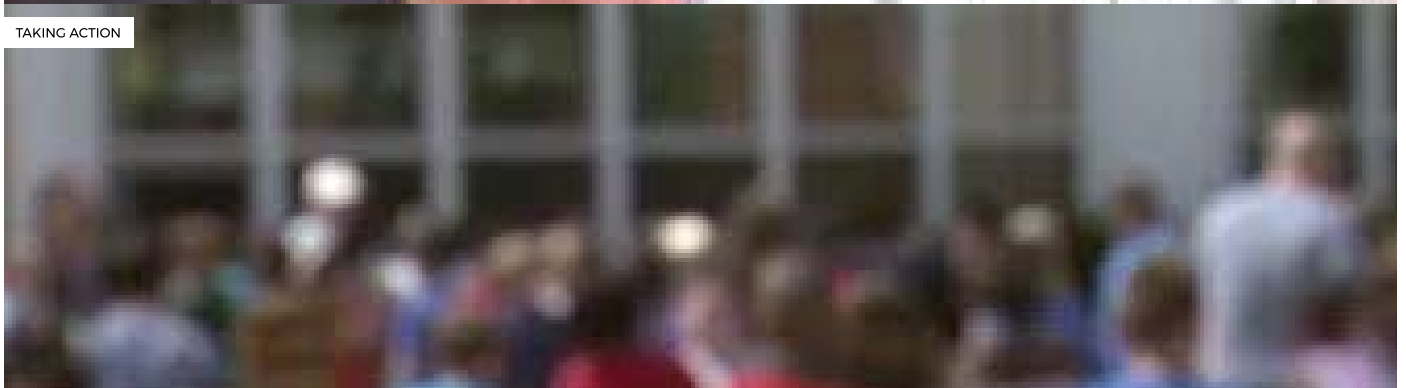
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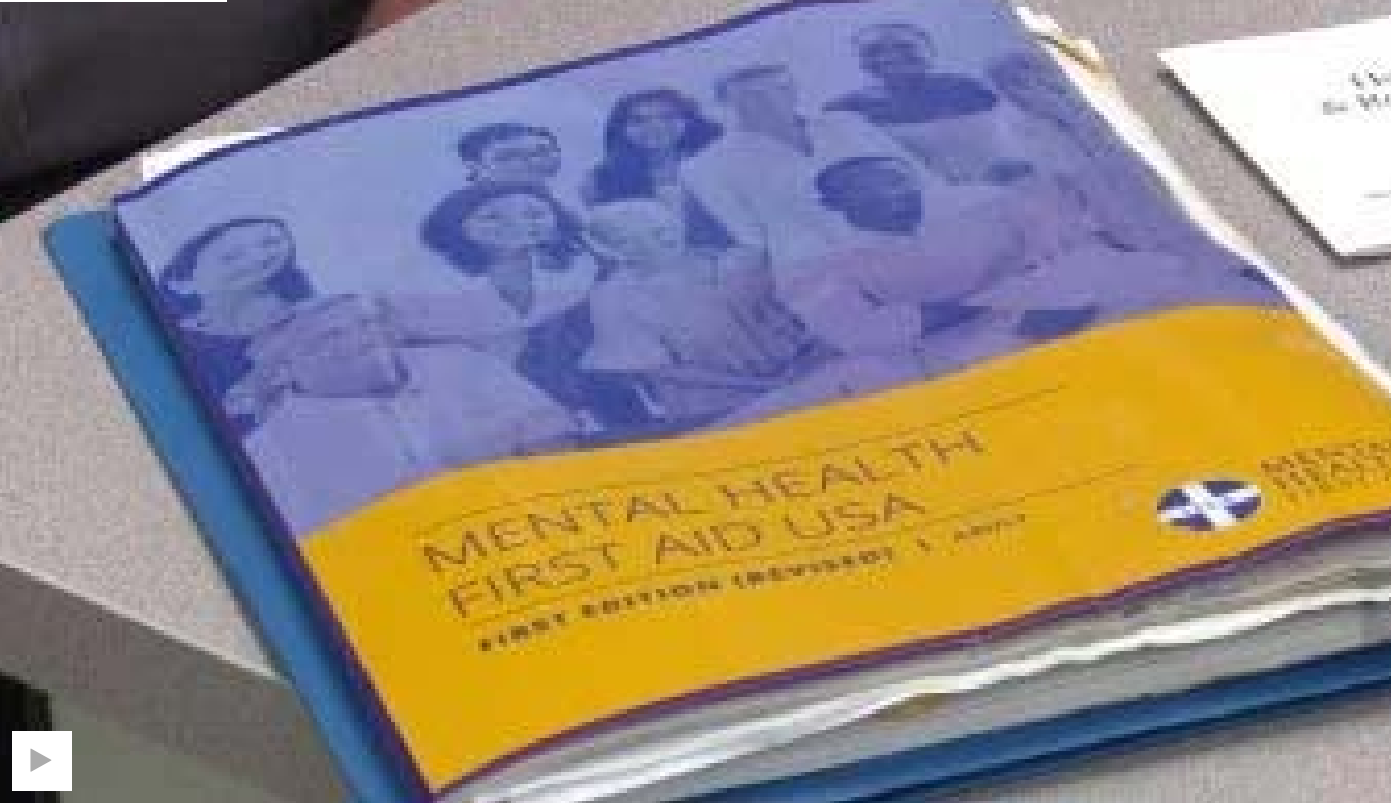
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Conversations can serve as the first step in de-escalating a mental health crisis in the workplace

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