Taking an Emotional Temperature

By Rachel Darby, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner

Taking an Emotional Temperature

When a friend or family member is not feeling well, one of the first things you likely think to do is take their temperature. Rightly, you reason, a fever would be a clear indicator of illness and a sign to take some action, whether it be to call in sick to work or to make a doctor’s appointment.

When the discomfort is emotional or mental, rather than physical, it’s harder to measure and harder to know when to take action. This is especially true, because everyone occasionally feels sad or down. Luckily, there are some indicators of emotional distress. The goal of this piece is to identify them and make some recommendations for next steps. Think of it as a way to take your loved one’s emotional temperature.

Imagine an affirmative response to each of the following conditions as a point on a 5-point scale. The higher the number the greater the likelihood of a serious emotional issue ranging from depression to suicidal ideation.

Has your loved one deviated from their normal routine? One of the first indicators that a loved one might be feeling off is a departure from their normal activities. If a person typically loves to read or cook, for instance, and they suddenly no longer feel like it (and have not taken up any new interests either), it’s time to begin paying attention.

Has your loved one changed their hygiene habits? Someone experiencing emotional distress may neglect their personal appearance, bathe less regularly, or not worry about brushing their teeth or hair, for instance. They may appear disheveled. This is your second clue that they may be experiencing emotional distress.

Are they sleeping irregularly? If your friend or family member suddenly starts sleeping during the day or is too anxious to sleep at night, this may be an indicator of emotional troubles. Because sleep is so...
Are they turning down opportunities to relate with others? If your friend or family member suddenly stops accepting invites or answering their phone, they may be feeling emotionally withdrawn.

Are they talking about not being around? One of the most serious ways that people let us know that they are distressed is by saying things like, “I am just a burden to everyone,” “I just want to fall asleep and not wake up,” or “I think it would be easier if I weren’t here.” They are unlikely to say, “I am thinking about committing suicide” or “I need help.”

Regardless of what number of “yeses” you came up with, it’s OK to ask the person about their feelings. Doing so will show them that you care. Listen without judgement and reassure the person that you are there for them. Share that help is available locally through agencies like United Counseling Service and through primary care providers.

If you feel they may be in immediate danger, stay close and ensure that they are not left alone. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or 9-1-1. Emergency services are available 24/7 at United Counseling Service for Bennington County residents at 802-442-5491.

Your attention to your loved one’s emotional state, as well as their physical health, is a great way to show you care and could make a lifesaving difference.

Rachel Darby, PMHNP, is a psychiatric nurse practitioner at United Counseling Service and Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, both in Bennington, VT.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention is Key

United Counseling Service is part of a statewide collaborative group, Vermont Care Partners: “A network of community-based agencies supporting people living with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and intellectual and development disabilities to live healthy, safe and satisfying lives in their communities”.

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and VCP has a four-part series on suicide awareness and prevention that we are sharing statewide with the hope of lessening the stigma often associated with this topic and mental health issues in general through increased understanding. We hope that this will lead to more people seeking help and therefore a decrease in rate of death by suicide in our state.

For more information about suicide awareness and prevention, please visit the Vermont Suicide Prevention Center at www.vtspc.org or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org or by calling 1-800-273-8255. If you are a Veteran, call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1. You can also use the Crisis Text Line by texting VT to 741741, and you will be connected with a live, trained counselor quickly. (learn more: www.crisistextline.org). Here in Bennington County, you can call United Counseling Service at 802-442-5491 and emergency services are available 24/7. You can also visit www.ucsvt.org for more info or check out United Counseling Service on Facebook.

Signs and Symptoms

How to Talk About Suicide - Having the Conversation

Suicide Does Not Discriminate

The Opposite of Suicide is Connection

Local organizations come together to spread the word that help is here.

United Counseling Service (UCS) and Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC), part of Southwestern
Vermont Health Care (SVHC), are leading a community-wide charge to spread awareness about suicide prevention at a new event: “Walk and Talk for Suicide Prevention Awareness.” The event is scheduled for 10 a.m. Saturday, September 7 at the pavilion of the Vermont Veteran’s Home at 325 North Street in Bennington.

“Suicide is a risk for so many, especially veterans and teens,” said Alya Reeve, MD, medical director for UCS. "We want to bring the topic out in to the open and spread the message that help is here."

The aim of this event is to draw the community together in a show of support for those who are struggling, share the signs that someone close to you is considering suicide, and provide helpful information about what to do.

The event will kick off with resources, refreshments, and brief inspirational remarks before the walk itself, which is about 2 miles long. All are welcome to participate in all or a portion of the walk. The walk will go across the Veteran’s home campus turn south on Park Street, east on County Street, and north on North Branch before returning west via a nature trail that follows the Roaring Branch Walloomsac Brook back to the Veteran’s Home.

“The route encircles the Veteran’s Home and the Mount Anthony Union High School,” Reeve said. "We hope our message of help and hope reach the veterans, students, and the entire community. You are not alone." .....Read more.

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Camp Be A Kid

Patricia LeBouef, Bennington Banner

North Bennington - Swimming, arts and crafts and play - with a side of mindfulness, team-building and social emotional skills.

Now in its sixth year, United Counseling Service's Camp Be a Kid has provided a specialized day camp experience for children it serves who might not be suited to a traditional camp model.

"Our camp was initially created by staff here in the Youth and Family Service Division," said Katie Aiken, Director of the camp. "Because what we were finding is - not all traditional day camps fit the needs of our children." The camp, which opened July 9, came to a close on Friday at Lake Paran.

The camp has grown and adapted over the years," Aiken said. "Organizers have kept things that worked, and eliminated things that don't.

"It's become more of a therapeutically-based model," she said. And they added the team model in the last few years.

There were 62 children participating this year. The camp, which is free, serves children who are receiving services from UCS Youth and Family Services Division, out of the Bennington office .....Read more.

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Rec Center Project Moves Forward

By Jim Therrien, Bennington Banner
The first phase of an ambitious, multi-million dollar plan to expand and transform the Bennington Recreation Center is expected to reach the construction stage by late fall. The Select Board heard an update Monday on the proposal, which the town is involved in through a partnership with the Early Childhood Services Division at United Counseling Service and the local Head Start program it manages.

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, director of the UCS division, and Jeff Goldstone and Jack Byer of Goldstone Architecture, gave a presentation that included images of the proposed center and floor plans showing one and both phases completed.

“This is very exciting,” Rathbun-Gunn said Tuesday. “I hope that in October we can have a groundbreaking ceremony.”

Phase one includes an addition along one side of the existing Rec Center to house early childhood classrooms and related services, as well as multi-use community spaces, plus a new building main entrance and lobby and an elevator. Twenty-five new parking spaces also will be created.

The construction work could be completed by October 2020, Rathbun-Gunn said. She added that, along with the Putnam Block redevelopment project now underway downtown, “we hope this will be a jumpstart [for the local economy].”

Rathbun-Gunn said the $3.5 million required for phase one would come from federal grant programs designed to develop facilities for early childhood educational and other services for children and families.

Having been approved at the regional level for the funding, the grant is “in the late stages” of the application process, she said, adding, “I don’t have a check in hand from Washington, D.C., but it looks good.”

A key reason the grant applications have been viewed favorably, Rathbun-Gunn said, is because this has been a cooperative effort with the town and the Rec Center, not a standalone facility only benefiting Head Start programs.

“It is because of this partnership that we are getting this funding,” she said....Read more.
PULSE MEETING

Please join us for this open meeting about programming and construction updates for the Bennington Recreation Center/Senior Center/Early Childhood Center addition.

All community members are encouraged to attend.

Meetings will be held every third Wednesday of the month from 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm at the Bennington Senior Center, 124 Pleasant Street, Bennington

- October 16th, 2019
- December 18th, 2019
- February 19th, 2020
- April 15th, 2020
- June 17th, 2020

Please contact Beth Wallace with any questions at BWallace@ucsvt.org or 802-442-3686.

Save the Date
Suicide is the leading cause of death of Vermonters ages 10 – 14 and the second leading cause for those 15 – 34. We all have an interest in helping protect ourselves, our friends, and our neighbors from suicide. This event will draw our community together in a show of support for those who are struggling, share the signs that someone close to you is thinking of suicide, and provide helpful information about what to do. Free. Refreshments provided.

The 2-mile route starts and ends at the Vermont Veteran’s Home.

Made possible with support from United Counseling Service’s Charlie Fund and Gregory S. Eineman Fund.

**Help is here**

WALK AND TALK
FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS

Saturday, September 7, 2019 | 10 – 11:30 AM
Vermont Veteran’s Home Pavilion | 325 North Street, Bennington

**Event Partners:**

Anyone. Anywhere. Can make a difference.

**Mental Health First Aid**
For a complete list of times and locations, visit our website at ucsvt.org.

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This training is free and open to the public but seating is limited. To sign up contact Jennifer Parizo at jparizo@ucsvt.org or call 802.442.5491
Wednesday, September 25th
6:00PM - 8:00PM
Performing Arts Center
Arlington Memorial High School
529 E Arlington Rd, Arlington, VT

A Q&A will follow the film.
This event is free and open to the public.
For more information visit ucsvt.org or call (802) 442-5491

Sponsored By:

Made possible in part by Gregory S. Holtman Fund and Charlie's Fund.
Adult Mental Health First Aid Training
September 18 -19, 2019
Visit UCS MHFA

Adult Mental Health First Aid Training
October 23-24, 2019
Visit UCS MHFA

UCS Presents: Downstream the Effects of Parental Incarceration
October 25, 2019
Visit UCS Presents Downstream

REGISTER NOW FOR UCS SUPERHERO 5K

For a full list of upcoming trainings and events please visit ucsvt.org.

Do you have a story to tell?
We would love to hear from you. Has UCS impacted your life? If you have a story you would like to share please contact Heidi French at hfrench@ucsvt.org or call (802) 442-5491 ext. 281.

Support from donors is vital

This year support from our donors is vital in ensuring that we continue to meet the growing needs of our community. Please consider making a donation. Your donation makes a difference and with your help we can build a stronger community.

For more information about giving, please click here to email Heidi French, Director of Community Relations and Development, or call at 802-442-5491.

DONATE NOW

or
Donations can be mailed to:
United Counseling Service
PO Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201

Are you interested in a career with a great organization?

We are proud to announce that UCS has been selected as the Best Place to Work and the Best Community Service Organization for the 2019 Readers Choice award!

An established leader and provider of health and human services in Southern Vermont, United Counseling Service provides nearly 3,000 people each year with a broad range of mental health, developmental and children’s services along with early childhood education. Approximately 300 employees are making a positive difference at 16 facilities operating throughout Bennington County.

Our employees are creative, thoughtful, energetic, forward thinking and empowered. UCS is living its mission: Building a stronger community by empowering individuals to live healthy and meaningful lives. If you want to make a difference and help those who need it most, consider joining our team. UCS is a great place to work and a great place to get care.
Check out all current openings with United Counseling Service at UCS CAREERS.

Proud to be a Center of Excellence

United Counseling Service (UCS) has been designated a Center of Excellence by Vermont Care Partners. UCS is a private, non-profit community mental health center serving Bennington County since 1958. UCS promotes healthy lifestyles through all its programs and offers care at 16 different facilities, including two primary outpatient facilities in Bennington and Manchester. UCS provides comprehensive, community-based behavioral and developmental services for children, adults, families, and seniors. UCS employs 300 people and annually serves nearly 3,000 Bennington County residents.