



WELCOME TO OUR

Monthly Newsletter

we're so glad you're here!

Hey there! A brief reintroduction



This month's newsletter is a heartfelt but heavy one. It will be longer than usual, so feel free to skip around to whichever articles feel most fitting for you.

September is **Suicide Prevention Month** and suicide awareness is something incredibly near and dear to me. As this newsletter has grown in the last few months, I wanted to take a moment to reintroduce myself and the story behind Campsen Wellness. As many of you know, I grew up in the beautiful, rolling cornfields of Iowa in a rural community. While it was a wonderful place to be raised, there was minimal mental health support for anyone in the area. Many people in my community, both loved ones and strangers, struggled quietly, and some lost their lives to that struggle. I came up with the name Campsen as a combination of those loved ones' names,

and the aim of my work is to support others with their mental health and normalize conversations around mental health. When I am not seeing individuals or families in my office, I am working on other projects that I hope to share with you all in the future. For now, please read through with care and check out more about my specialty areas at the bottom of the newsletter.

Talking About Suicide Doesn't Cause Suicide: A Note on Getting Better at Having These Hard Conversations

September is Suicide Prevention Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness, sharing resources, remembering those we have lost, and hopefully making conversations about mental health a little less intimidating. Perhaps one of the most important misconceptions we need to address is this:

Talking about suicide does not put the idea into someone's head.

As a therapist, I have heard this fear many times, even from other therapists who have not been as well-versed in talking about suicidality.

- "What if I ask them and they weren't thinking about it?"
- "I don't want to say the word suicide because I might make things worse."
- "Could talking about it make someone more likely to do it?"

The short answer is no. Extensive research and suicide prevention organizations consistently emphasize that asking someone directly about suicide does not cause suicidal thoughts or increase someone's likelihood of acting on them. In many cases, asking directly can provide relief. It gives someone permission to be honest about something they may have been desperately trying to hide.

Suicide Is Already Difficult Enough to Talk About

Imagine carrying around one of the most painful and terrifying thoughts a person can experience while simultaneously feeling like you aren't allowed to say it aloud. That is the reality for many people experiencing suicidal thoughts.

They may fear being judged. They may worry someone will panic. They may be afraid of being hospitalized. They may worry about becoming a burden. They may feel ashamed for having thoughts they don't actually want to have.

And sometimes, the people around them are equally afraid. We dance around the subject. We say things like:

- "Let me know if you need anything."
- "You aren't going to do anything stupid, right?"
- "You wouldn't hurt yourself, would you?"

While these questions often come from a place of love and concern, they can unintentionally communicate that suicide is too scary or uncomfortable to discuss directly. Sometimes the most compassionate thing we can do is simply ask:

"Are you thinking about suicide?" or "Are you able to keep yourself safe right now?"

Not vaguely or indirectly. Not with shame or panic attached. Just honestly.

It feels incredibly intimidating and sometimes almost feels like you're doing something wrong by talking about it frankly. But in reality, it is quite the opposite: you are doing loved ones -- and clients who struggle -- a service by openly talking about suicidality. You are making them feel more comfortable with the thoughts in their heads.

There is a longstanding myth that discussing suicide somehow plants the idea in someone's mind. But suicidal thoughts do not work that way. If someone has never considered suicide, hearing another person ask about it does not suddenly create a desire to die. And if someone has been struggling with suicidal thoughts, asking about them doesn't make those thoughts worse simply because they have finally been named. Silence can often be far more dangerous. Silence can reinforce shame. Silence can make someone believe they are alone. Silence can communicate that their most painful experiences are too uncomfortable for anyone else to hear. Talking about suicide responsibly is about creating space for honesty, connection, intervention, and support.

We Talk About Other Medical Concerns. Why Not This One?

If you suspected someone was having chest pain, you would ask about it. If you noticed signs of a sprain, you might express concern. If someone showed symptoms of a serious medical condition, you wouldn't avoid asking questions because you were afraid mentioning the diagnosis would somehow cause it. Mental health deserves the same approach.

Suicidal thoughts are often symptoms of significant emotional pain. They can emerge alongside depression, trauma, grief, anxiety, chronic pain, substance use, major life transitions, and countless other experiences.

They deserve attention and need to be taken seriously. Taking them seriously means practicing saying "suicide" aloud, talking about those dark thoughts, and realizing that having these conversations often takes a lot of the burden off the person who is struggling.

What Can You Say?

If you are concerned about someone, you don't have to have the perfect words. You just have to be willing to open the door.



You might say:

- "I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How are you really doing?"
- "You've mentioned feeling like things are hopeless. Are you having thoughts about suicide?"
- "Sometimes when people feel this overwhelmed, they have thoughts about wanting to die. Is that something you've been experiencing?"
- "You don't seem like yourself. Are things really dark right now?"
- "You can be honest with me. I'm not going to judge you."
- "You don't have to handle this alone."

And if they say yes?

Try not to panic and thank them for telling you. Listen and stay present. Help connect them to appropriate support. This might include their therapist, an emergency room, a suicide hotline, a psychiatric urgent care. You do not need to immediately become their therapist or solve every problem they are facing. Your role may simply be to help them get through the next step. At the bottom of this newsletter, I have resources listed nationally and for each of the states that I serve (Maryland and Iowa). Please check them out if they may be helpful for you and/or a loved one.

The Goal Is Not to Have All the Answers

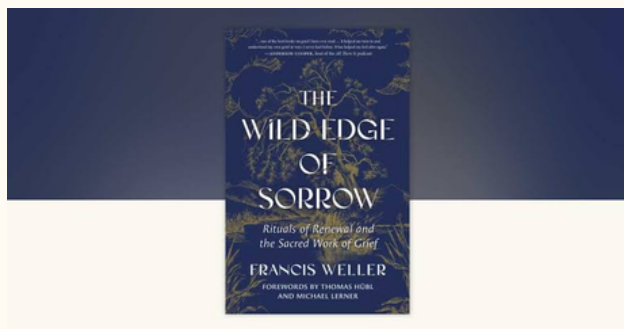
One reason people avoid conversations about suicide is because they fear saying the wrong thing. You don't need a degree in psychology or counseling to demonstrate care. You don't need to perfectly understand someone's pain to sit beside them in it. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is sit with them in their pain, not let them be alone, and implicitly communicate: I'm not afraid of this conversation, and I'm not afraid of you.

Suicide prevention requires more than awareness campaigns and inspirational social media posts. It requires much more than thoughts and prayers. It requires us to become more comfortable having uncomfortable conversations. It requires us to recognize that asking about suicide is not planting a seed; it is extending a hand to someone who has

been waiting for permission to tell the truth.



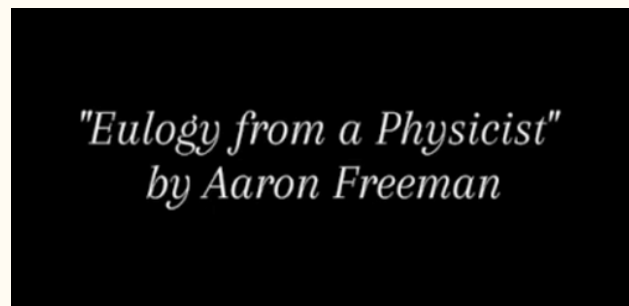
Let's continue making space for conversations about mental health not because talking about suicide makes it more likely to happen, but because connection, honesty, and access to support can make it easier for someone to believe they are not alone and that it can get better.



Book of the Month

THE WILD EDGE OF SORROW

The exploration of sorrow and becoming an apprentice of sorrow after loss.

[READ HERE](#)

Short Reading

EULOGY FROM A PHYSICIST

A small reading by a physicist for those grieving the loss of a loved one.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Remembering Them: Meaningful Ways to Memorialize a Loved One Lost to Suicide

Grief after suicide is complicated and seemingly endless. You feel the immense sadness, the fiery anger, the terrifying bleakness, the overpowering guilt, and the daunting hopelessness. Some days feel lighter and you can breathe without the weight on your chest, other days feel devastatingly heavy.

There is no “good” or “right” way to experience it. It’s just there, walking alongside you always.

You replay conversations and wonder what you could have missed. You wish you had known the “right” thing to say and if you could have done something differently. You wonder if they would regret the decision if they were still here. You hope and pray that they are now in a better place and feel no more pain.

Sometimes one of the most painful parts of losing someone to suicide is their death overshadowing their life. People become afraid of saying their name. They avoid talking about them because they don’t want you to hurt. Their story is reduced to their death rather than the amazing person they were. They were (and still are) a collection of beautiful memories, relationships, quirks, dreams, inside jokes, favorite songs, mistakes, accomplishments, and experiences.

Memorializing someone can be one way to continue carrying their life forward; not because grief has an expiration date or it's going to lessen the pain but because love does not end when someone dies. Your love for them will remain whether they exist here or not, and memorializing them in whatever way feels fitting to you can help you hold onto the beauty of who they were.

Here are a few meaningful ways to honor someone you have lost to suicide:

Say Their Name

Sometimes the simplest thing is also the hardest. Say their name, talk about them, tell stories about who they were, remember the funny things they said and the things they loved.

When someone dies by suicide, families sometimes feel pressure to avoid discussing the death or the person altogether. While everyone deserves privacy and each family gets to decide what feels appropriate, silence does not have to be the only way forward. It can be incredibly difficult but also incredibly healing to talk about them, to laugh about them, and to openly cry about them.

Create Something in Their Honor or Continue Something They Loved

Creative expression can provide a place for grief to go. You might create:

- A scrapbook or memory book
- A piece of artwork
- A playlist of songs that remind you of them
- A garden or planted tree
- A piece of jewelry containing their handwriting or another meaningful symbol
- A collection of letters written to them
- A photo album shared with family and friends

What brought your loved one joy? Maybe they loved animals, music, sports, cooking, reading, traveling, or spending time outdoors. Finding small ways to continue something meaningful to them can create a sense of connection. This might look like volunteering at an animal shelter because they loved dogs. Planting flowers because they loved gardening. Supporting a local sports team they never missed watching. Cooking their favorite meal for friends. Reading a book they once recommended. These acts don't have to be grand. Sometimes remembering someone looks like ordering their favorite coffee on a difficult day.



There is no requirement for memorialization to be public and it can be whatever you want it to be. Sometimes creating something just for yourself can be equally meaningful. There's no right or wrong way to express that you loved someone deeply and you want to remember them.

Acknowledge Birthdays and Important Dates

Anniversaries are difficult. Birthdays, holidays, the anniversary of their death, and other significant dates will bring grief back to the surface. The first few years, you may have to just sit with the pain of the day and continue grieving. And often, "celebrating" sounds like a foreign word on these days. How can you celebrate with such grief? I find acknowledging to be more fitting term for the notable days.

With time, you can find comfort in intentionally creating rituals around them. Visit a place they loved. Light a candle. Watch their favorite movie. Donate to a cause they cared about. Gather with people who loved them and share stories.

The goal isn't to force celebration when you feel sad. It is to remember the complex and beautiful human that they were. To acknowledge that they mattered in life and they still matter in death. To know that even if they couldn't feel it in their lifetime, they were loved then and they are still very much loved now.

Allow Their Story a Place to Exist

There can be a complicated relationship between honoring someone and discussing their passing. You do not have to hide the truth about how someone died in order to protect their memory. At the same time, you also don't owe anyone details. *You* get to decide how their story is shared. For some people, participating in suicide prevention advocacy or fundraising can feel deeply meaningful. For others, keeping their loved one's memory private feels more healing. Neither is wrong. Memorialization should serve your grieving process, not the expectations of other people. Some people find comfort in turning grief into action. Talking about their story and giving it a platform does not erase the grief, but sometimes it allows us to continue creating something meaningful from a relationship that mattered deeply.

Give Yourself Permission to Remember the Complicated Parts Too

Memorializing someone doesn't mean pretending they were perfect. Grief can become especially complicated after suicide. You can miss someone and still be angry with them. You can feel guilty about "not catching something" and self-righteous that they left you. You can love someone so deeply in your bones and acknowledge that they caused lifelong pain. You can remember beautiful moments while also remembering difficult ones. Grieving does not require rewriting the relationship, more so making space for the whole truth.

There is often pressure to “move on” after someone dies. Life moves on and we feel stuck in the past. It happens quickly. One week, you’re sitting in a pew or next a hospital bed and the next moment, they’re gone. One month, everyone is sending thoughts and prayers, cooking you dishes, and checking in and the next, it’s too quiet.

Grief is not something we complete or ever get to check off our to-do lists. Over time, it changes shape. The intensity may shift. You may learn how to carry the loss differently, but remembering someone years later does not mean you are stuck. Missing someone does not mean you are broken. Creating a memorial, continuing a tradition, or speaking their name is not refusing to let go.

It is an acknowledgment that they were here. They were real. They mattered. And they are still dearly loved.

With that acknowledgement, please also take time to remember that *their death was not your fault*. You may have questions that cannot be answered and regrets that cannot be undone. You may have days where you get stuck in the “what could have been” or the surrealness of it all. Those feelings are common in grief, but they do not mean you were responsible for another person's pain or choices. You deserve space to grieve the person you lost and you deserve to find some solace despite the weight of losing them.

I personally hate the phrase “time heals all” but I do believe time provides distance and often a little clarity. A way to manage the pain and memorialize them in the ways you both deserve. Give yourself time and allow yourself to remember them for all of the complexities of who they were while finding ways to honor them as you continue to live on.

An Open Letter To Those That Struggle

Trigger Warning: This article contains information about suicidal thoughts and conversations around suicide. This article is intended for educational and supportive purposes and is not medical advice, crisis intervention, or a substitute for individualized mental health treatment. If you are in immediate danger or believe you may act on thoughts of harming yourself, call emergency services or go to the nearest emergency department. Call or text 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.



Hey there,

I don't know exactly what brought you here. I don't know what your life looks like, and I don't know how long you've been carrying this pain. But if you are reading this while wondering whether you can keep going, I want to start here:

You deserve support before you reach your breaking point.

You do not have to wait until you have a plan. You do not have to wait until things become unbearable or for the day you have enough energy to "just do it." You do not have to earn the right to ask for help. Suicidal thoughts look different from person to person. They can be intrusive and frightening thoughts that are entirely unwanted. Or maybe it feels like bone-deep exhaustion. A desire to disappear or a wish to go to sleep and not wake up. A belief that everyone would be better off. A feeling of being trapped in darkness with no exit. And sometimes, experiencing suicidal thoughts doesn't actually mean you want to end your life. It means the pain has become unbearable and you need rest. You need circumstances to change and the feeling of drowning to ease.

Please Tell Someone What Is Happening

I know this part can be terrifying. You may worry about being judged or loved ones panicking. Hospitalization may be daunting and traumatizing. Your brain may have convinced you that you are burdening everyone around you but know that suicidal thoughts grow more powerful with isolation. One of the first and best things I encourage you to do is identify someone safe that you can share your truth with. You don't have to be perfectly articulate and organized in your delivery. You can say something like:

"I'm not doing okay, and I'm scared to be alone with my thoughts right now." or "I'm having thoughts about not wanting to be here, and I think I need help." or "I don't know exactly what I need, but I know I shouldn't be alone right now."

Let someone into the room with you physically and emotionally even if that is the last thing you want right now.

Make the Goal Smaller

When the darkness has thrown a heavy blanket over your head and you can't find any light coming through, people often want you to think about the future with phrases like it will get better or think about everything you have to live for. The future feels impossible right now when you can't see any light and are barely surviving...So we work on making the goal smaller. We don't focus on committing to being okay forever or even tomorrow. We don't solve every problem or envision a future for ourselves tonight, we just focus on how to get through the next hour or even the next minute.

That means moving to a room where other people are or calling someone so you are not alone. It means putting distance between yourself and the things that you could use to hurt yourself. It means eating something, taking a shower, and watching your comfort show. It means texting a crisis line (linked below) or making an appointment with a therapist.

The goal is to keep yourself safe in the current moment, not to magically feel better. If you can create enough safety and support for this one moment, then you can do it for the next one as well. You aren't trying to rip the heavy blanket off of your head; you are poking holes in it so a little light can shine in.

We are actively avoiding permanent decision-making while in emotionally heightened states. Your pain is real and the circumstances are difficult. I will not pretend that positive thinking is going to solve this but I will suggest that you consider the universal experience of feelings (even incredibly intense ones) as changeable. Our brains are not always reliable narrators when we are overwhelmed, exhausted, and depressed. The version of you experiencing the most pain does not deserve to make every decision for the versions that have not yet had the opportunity to exist. Give yourself time and borrow hope from someone else while yours is out of commission.

Create a Plan Before the Next Crisis

If you experience recurring suicidal thoughts, I strongly encourage you to work with a qualified mental health professional to develop an individualized safety plan.

A safety plan typically includes:

- Warning signs that tell you a crisis may be escalating
- Explicit triggers for crises
- Coping strategies that help you tolerate intense emotions
- People you can contact
- Places where you feel safer
- Local crisis resources
- Steps for reducing access to things you could use to seriously harm yourself
- Reasons for living or reminders of what helps you stay connected

You do not have to figure all of this out alone. And importantly, a safety plan is not about promising that you will never experience suicidal thoughts again. It is about having support and structure available when your ability to think clearly becomes compromised by suicidal thoughts.

Sometimes weekly therapy is helpful and other times medication quiets the thoughts. Sometimes you need a higher level of support. This might look like intensive outpatient programs, day programs, group therapy, and/or family therapy. There is no shame in needing more. Getting additional support does not mean you failed at handling things because we as humans were never designed to survive everything alone.

A Few Affirmations I Want To Leave You With

You are not weak because you are tired.

You are not manipulative because you need reassurance.

You are not dramatic because your pain feels overwhelming.

You are not selfish for needing help.

You are not broken beyond repair.

And you are not a burden because you are struggling.

I know that sometimes these words can feel impossible to believe. And that's okay. You don't have to believe all of them right now. Just consider leaving a little room for the possibility that your current thoughts about yourself and your future are not the entire truth of who you are. There are things you haven't experienced yet. People you haven't met. Places you haven't seen. Versions of yourself you haven't become.

Healing does not look like waking up one morning and suddenly loving your life. Healing starts much smaller. It starts with poking small holes in the darkness like telling someone the truth, making it through one more night, deciding that while you don't know what happens next, you are willing to stay long enough to find out.

If you are struggling right now, please reach out to someone. A friend, a family member, a therapist, a doctor, a crisis counselor – someone safe. You deserve help now and if all you can do today is stay alive then let that be more than enough for today.

Maryland Resources

- Baltimore County Crisis Response Team: 410-931-2214
- Baltimore City Crisis Response Team: 410-433-5175
- [Pathlight Mood and Anxiety Center](#)
- [Sheppard Pratt Psychiatric Urgent Care & Walk-In Clinic](#)

National Resources

- Emergency: 911
- National Suicide Hotline: 988
- Call Blackline: 800-604-5841 (for people of color)
- LGBT National Help Center: 888-843-4564
- [Trevor Project](#): 866-488-7386
- Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860
- Thrive Lifeline: 313-662-8209
- StrongHearts Native Helpline: 844-762-8483 (crises for Native Americans)

Iowa Resources

- Dubuque Crisis Response: 855-581-8111
- [NAMI Dubuque](#)
- [MercyOne Behavioral Health](#): 563-589-9299
- [University of Iowa Partial Hospitalization Program](#)
- [Ember Partial Hospitalization Program](#)

More on Grace & Campsen

Here are my specialty areas, and please feel free to wander around [my website](#) for additional information:

- **Trauma & PTSD** – Throughout my graduate training and afterward, I developed a specialty area in trauma-informed counseling. I work with people who have experienced trauma in relationships, from family members, or because of stressful upbringings. Most of the people I see are incredibly resilient, open-minded, thoughtful, curious, and compassionate individuals at their best, but they often walk through my door feeling judgmental of themselves or others, stressed, irritable, distrustful, and even a little hopeless. We work together to get back to their best so they don't feel guarded all the time and no one has to walk on eggshells anymore.
- **Teens/Tweens** – While training, I also developed a passion for working with teens and tweens. Working with kids as they grow into themselves and define who they are for the first time is incredibly meaningful, and something I really enjoy being a part of. They may be experiencing anxiety, depression, executive functioning challenges, neurodiversity, or simply the pressures of being a teen in 2026, and I am happy to support them while they navigate it.
- **Mother-Daughter Therapy** – My newest specialty area has been developing over the past two years. I noticed a gap in meaningful connection and repair with individual clients of my own. As a therapist and fellow human, I place an incredibly high value on relationships, whether romantic, friendly, or familial. We need a village to persevere, and we need to be good villagers ourselves. I found that many mothers and daughters were struggling to do that for each other adequately, so I have been working to help mothers and daughters repair and reconnect since.

I am always excited to connect with other providers in the field of healthcare -- whether you are another therapist, a physician, a PT, a nurse practitioner, etc.

Please feel free to schedule a virtual coffee chat when convenient for you, I'd look forward to connecting and exploring ways to collaborate.

SCHEDULE A COFFEE CHAT

If you or someone you know may benefit from my specialty areas. Please feel free to click the link below to schedule a consultation. I look forward to talking further!

CONTACT ME



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