The Way Forward:
A new and fearless approach to people, like us, who have been suicidal

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Polling Question #1

Our organization routinely uses the voice of...

1) Family and/or others who have lost a loved one to suicide
2) Suicide attempt survivors
3) Peer supporters who have experienced significant mental and emotional distress
Presenters

**Cara Anna** is a New York-based journalist who currently covers the United Nations. A pair of suicide attempts while working as a foreign correspondent in China led her to seek out other attempt survivors around the world and share their stories. She is the Founder of [Talkingaboutsucide.com](http://Talkingaboutsucide.com) that features interviews with "out" survivors. At the request of the American Association of Suicidology, she created a similar project, [Attemptsurvivors.com](http://Attemptsurvivors.com). She is a member of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention's attempt survivor task force. This emerging community has been covered this year by The New York Times, NPR, the Guardian, the BBC and more.
The Way Forward

www.Livethroughthis.org : A national portrait project of attempt survivors
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What is The Way Forward?

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Our video at http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/task-force/suicide-attempt-survivors
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Why is The Way Forward needed?

For too long, people who have been suicidal have been left out of the conversation. It’s time to see us as essential partners.
Polling Question #2

Bringing suicide attempt survivors together will lead to…

A) Making suicidal thinking worse
B) Lead to greater peer support amongst attempt survivors
C) Inform the field regarding what is needed to move forward
D) Create copycat situations
E) A only
F) B and C
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Why did it take so long for such a report?

Old-fashioned stigma. People mistakenly thought that our talking about this issue, especially with each other, would make suicidal thinking worse. They were wrong.
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Where can we find The Way Forward?

http://actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/task-force/suicide-attempt-survivors
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What are its essential values?
• Respect
• Inclusion
• Real treatment
• Peer support
• No repercussions for speaking up and seeking help
• More openness
• More understanding
• Less silence and fear
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Where’s the evidence?

Lead author, Dr. DeQuincy Lezine and other task force members pulled together research and existing programs, policies and practices that best met our values.
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What are five key things anyone can do?
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Publicly endorse the inclusion of people who have been suicidal in all suicide prevention efforts. (Recommendation 1.16)
National and other organizations should show clearly that we’re welcome
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Develop, evaluate and promote programs to help families and friends of people who have been suicidal. (Recommendation 2.3)
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This is the only such group we’ve found in the U.S. Please let us know of others.
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Promote professional clinical education and training on how to treat someone during and after a suicidal crisis. (Recommendation 3.3)
Kentucky has done the same. California’s governor vetoed a similar bill, however -- a few weeks after Robin Williams’ death by suicide.
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Develop, promote and evaluate peer support groups for people who have been suicidal. (Recommendation 1.6)
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Alternatives to Suicide

Historically, people have believed that it was too dangerous to offer peer-to-peer support groups focused on the topic of suicide without a clinician present. There are many myths and fears around this sort of group and around suicide in general. However, as a community we have found strength in coming together to talk about many ‘taboo’ topics and to support one another in our times of greatest distress. Our collective wisdom and individual stories have taught us that the space to come together in this way can be powerful and healing. It is out of this work and learning that the Alternatives to Suicide approach was born.

Western Mass Recovery Learning Community

www.westernmassrlc.org
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Develop a network of professionals who have been suicidal to research and evaluate supports for others who have "been there." (Recommendation 6.4)
Why is this work important?

In 2012, approximately 2.5 million people in the United States made a suicide attempt.
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Is there momentum for The Way Forward?

Without a doubt ...
Suicide Prevention Sheds a Longstanding Taboo: Talking About Attempts

By BENEDICT CAREY  APRIL 13, 2014

Suicide Attempt Survivors Seek A Voice In Helping Others At Risk

July 11, 2014  12:38 PM ET

Filmed March 2011 at TEDActive 2011
JD Schramm: Break the silence for suicide attempt survivors
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Who likes The Way Forward?

![Logos](Alternatives 2014, Suicide Prevention Lifeline, SAMHSA, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, National Council for Behavioral Health)
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Why does the world need our voices?

“We found our way out, and sometimes that makes us uniquely qualified to help others find their way, too.”

- Task force member Sabrina Strong
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Where is this growing community?

www.Livethroughthis.org
www.Attemptsurvivors.com
@unsuicide on Twitter
#SPSM chat on Twitter
In the Chat Box

If you had one thing you could do to improve the lives of people who have been suicidal, what would that be?...
Other Resources

Zero Suicide Toolkit - Tools and strategies for health care organizations that are organizing their systems around the goal of zero suicides.

Zero Suicide Toolkit

Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
Zero Suicide Pre-Conference
Thank you!

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