Greetings!

At this time of year, when the days grow shorter and the nights longer, we can sometimes feel engulfed by the darkness. Due to the pandemic, 2020 certainly has been a dark time for many struggling with uncertainty, growing anxiety and sudden loss. However, it is also the time of year when we start to notice beautiful lights twinkling and disrupting the night’s darkness. Similarly, I see many beacons of light shining in this dark time and for whom I am extremely grateful. Those who despite their staggering pain find the strength and courage to ask for help; those who diligently and compassionately provide crisis support; and those who journey daily to provide a spark of hope for others where such is waning.

The coming year holds a lot of promise for the work of CASP as we continue to boldly venture alongside many others towards a Canada without suicide. Early in 2021, under the banner of our new Alliance for Suicide Bereavement and Postvention, CASP will be launching the Suicide Bereavement Support Group Facilitators Network. The year will also see enhanced advocacy and awareness through a concentrated campaign from coast to coast to coast. A focus on people impacted by suicide loss will continue to be an essential part of CASP’s work. Further, CASP values our developing relationship with First Nations in support of life promotion efforts. Partnerships are important to CASP, and we will continue to work with our many colleagues in the suicide prevention sector, especially through the National Collaborative on Suicide Prevention. Finally, from October 27-29 in Montreal, we are excited to see the return of the CASP National Conference on Suicide Prevention, this year in partnership with the Centre for Research and Intervention on Suicide, Ethical Issues and End-of-Life Practices (CRISE-UQAM) and the Association québécoise de prévention du suicide (AQPS).

Thank you to all of CASP’s donors, members, partners, directors and staff for all you have done this past year to make CASP’s work possible. I wish you all the very best for the Holiday Season and the New Year. Please be kind to yourself and to all you encounter.

Sincerely,

Sean Krausert
Executive Director
For those who have experienced loss, are dealing with significant stressors or just trying to cope day to day, the festive season brings expectations, adrenaline-charged atmosphere and competing demands that are often just too much to manage.

So, how do you navigate this time of year? A lot of the “how-to’s” are common sense maybe, but they bear repeating. All too often, we forget what we know about how to best manage, when faced with an added layer of stress to an already challenging life.

Here’s what you can do to take care of yourself:

**Acknowledge your feelings.** It really is okay to not be in the mood to celebrate. Whatever your emotions are, once you name them, it is easier to figure out a plan for how to cope. It’s the first rule of safety planning, no matter the situation, that you have to make sure you’re okay before you can help others. That’s not being selfish—it’s just being practical.

**Just say no.** It’s important to not overschedule during these jam-packed times. Sift through the various priorities and obligations and just pick the ones that are the most important. Those are the ones that really are either essential or that you might enjoy. Decline the others. Setting boundaries really is necessary for promoting and maintaining good mental health.

**Change is okay.** Just because you always did it that way doesn’t mean that you can’t do things another way, by eliminating or substituting. Starting new traditions may not only reduce stress but it can also give you the chance to find more meaningful activities and rituals that can contribute to a sense of peace and fulfilment. New routines are to be welcomed when you are dreading or going through the motions with the old ones that no longer seem right.

**Make room for those who are no longer with us.** All too often we think that we need to hide our grief during the holidays so that we don’t impose our feelings of loss on others. Experience has taught us, however, that including rituals to acknowledge the person who is missing can be very meaningful not only for survivors but also for family and friends who are looking for ways to express their support.

**Pay attention to what your body is saying.** The mind body connection is very real. Eating consciously to make sure you are feeding it nutritiously and limiting alcohol intake does help. Trying to get some exercise in, beyond shopping and house cleaning, is also a good thing to make time for. Do you use meditation, breathing exercises or mindfulness as a way of dealing with stress? Now might be a good time to practice those self-care techniques. Planning for breaks just to relax makes good sense when your body starts showing signs of stress.

**Take a few moments to reflect on what is good in your world.** Yes the holidays can be difficult to get through. And, all may not be right in your world. But, on any given day, there are moments of satisfaction or appreciation. Take a moment to identify those and reflect on how simple things or naming what is working can help change the emotional temperature for you, even momentarily.

**Stay connected.** It’s sometimes difficult during the holidays to find the balance between the necessary alone time and too much togetherness. While it’s important to be able to withdraw for short periods of time to catch your breath, it’s also helpful to remember to reach out to your support network when you are feeling overwhelmed or emotionally uncomfortable. That’s not the right time to isolate yourself. Identify who is the best person to talk to when you are feeling down, who to share with when things are okay and what resources are available when you need to talk to someone else or in an emergency. An emotional burden shared can feel lighter for a while.

When internal and external stresses join forces during the holiday season, it helps to identify those strategies and supports that can help make this time as workable for you as possible.
Launching Suicide Bereavement Support Group Facilitators Network in 2021

The launch of CASP’s Suicide Bereavement Support Group Facilitators Network will take place in the new year! With the support of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, this exciting new initiative – the first of its kind in Canada – aims to bring together a community of people who provide suicide bereavement group support services in order to share knowledge and develop best practices. The Network will not only offer support for facilitators through the sharing of experiences and knowledge transfer, but also help reduce the isolation experienced by individual facilitators in rural and urban regions across Canada.

Events brought to you by:

International Day for People Impacted by Suicide Loss Day

On Saturday, November 21, 2020, in honour of International Day for People Impacted by Suicide Loss (also known as International Suicide Loss Survivors Day in the USA), CASP hosted an inaugural event - a virtual live screening of video testimonials.

Based on a series of interviews with those who have experienced a suicide loss at some point in their life, whether that be a friend, colleague or family member, these personal testimonials concentrated specifically on the ‘loss journey’, from the early stages of their loss to the present day with a focus on hope and healing.

This video screening was followed by presentations and a Q&A session, both in English and in French.

International Day for People Impacted by Suicide Loss was renamed by CASP as an alternative to the American term “Survivors Day” in order to be inclusive of all those individuals who have lost someone to suicide, no matter whether they consider themselves bereaved by suicide, a survivor of suicide loss, or any other term that reflects their loss experience. CASP recognizes that the experience of loss often extends into the community, well-beyond just close friends and family members.

This special day marks the time each year when people impacted by suicide loss, no matter where they live, can come together as a community; to find and offer comfort and to remember those who have died by suicide through shared stories of loss, healing and hope.

Just prior to International Day for People Impacted by Suicide Loss, CASP also hosted two ‘social media’ days on their social media platforms to increase engagement and build awareness.

The International Day for People Impacted by Suicide Loss event was funded with support from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, as a result of a newly created national Suicide Bereavement & Postvention Alliance.

First of its kind in Canada, the mission of the Alliance is to foster communities, resource sharing and support initiative related to suicide bereavement and postvention in Canada, including hosting a number of events.

International Day for People Impacted by Suicide Loss
Journée internationale des personnes touchées par une perte par suicide
CASP’s 34th Annual General Meeting was held on October 23, 2020 and, for the first-time ever, it was hosted virtually.

CASP welcomed four new board members elected at the AGM: Amelia Curran (NL), Corey Cadeau (NS), Dr. Juveria Zaheer (ON) and Veronica Marshall-Bernard (NS); and bid farewell to outgoing board members, Jérôme Gaudreault (QC) and Rebecca Sandford (BC).

The Annual Meeting also recognized the meaningful work and dedicated efforts of departing Executive Director, Julie-Kathleen Campbell and Associate Director, Karen Letofsky.

The accomplishments of the past year are captured in our Annual Report which can be found on our website:
https://suicideprevention.ca/resources/Documents/CASPARENGv2FINAL.pdf

CASP Holds Virtual Annual General Meeting

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In lieu of CASP’s annual National Conference this year, Conference co-hosts - the Association québécoise de prévention du suicide (AQPS) and the Centre for Research and Intervention on Suicide, Ethical Issues and End-of-Life Practices (CRISE-UQAM) - hosted a suite of virtual webinars featuring a variety of topics of interest to clinicians, students, researchers, people with lived experience and community members with offerings in English and French.

Providing an opportunity to get a preview of what’s in store for the Montreal conference in 2021, their amazing efforts, hard work and extreme versatility as co-hosts paid off with a total of 1700 participants in attendance throughout the three-day duration of webinars. CASP would like to express its gratitude for their stellar efforts! Congratulations!
Introducing CASP's Team

MEET OUR STAFF...

Name: Sean Krausert  
CASP Job Title: Executive Director  
CASP Job Responsibilities: Managing all of CASP’s operations  
Relevant Background/Education: B.A. (Political Science; History); LL.B. Has several decades of executive leadership experience in the non-profit, for profit and public sectors.  
Note to Readers: Sean would love to hear your ideas on how CASP can help create awareness about suicide prevention in your community.

Name: Janine Vincent  
CASP Job Title: Administrative Assistant  
CASP Job Responsibilities: Email wrangling, information hunting, document and presentation beautifying, process improving, procedure creating and coordinating.  
Relevant Background/Education: Over 30 years of combined experience in finance, insurance, and non-profits as an Office Manager, Executive Assistant, and Volunteer Manager.  
Note to Readers: Have a question and not sure where to go or who to ask? Looking for information? Sharing information? As our resident human information bank, Janine is your go to person to get started.

Name: Erika Luoma  
CASP Job Title: Communications and Fund Development Coordinator  
Relevant Background/Education: BA in Political Science and Sociology; Finnish University Diploma in Eastern European Studies; Post-Degree Diploma in Print Journalism. Has over 20 years of Government and Public Sector Communications experience.  
Note to Readers: Erika would be happy to assist you with any CASP-related fundraising needs you may have or any marketing campaign ideas you would like to see!
With a little help from our friends...

Forever grateful to our donors!
During this wonderful season of giving and generosity, CASP would like to thank our many members, donors, volunteers, board members, staff and the community-at-large for their continuing support and assistance with advocacy in the prevention of suicide in Canada.

We are beyond grateful to our donors who give to CASP.

With the support of donations and dedicated commitment from individual Canadians, CASP continues to advocate and promote awareness on the crisis of suicide and the importance of mental health in this country. Together we can make a difference.

RECOGNIZING THE EFFORTS OF OTHERS!

In honour of the recent International Day for People Impacted by Suicide Loss Day, that was recognized on November 21st, Mount Royal Kantorei released a performance of ‘Please Stay’ by composer Jake Runestad, in an effort to shine a light on suicide, suicide prevention, and help destigmatize mental health concerns.

They hope by sharing this powerful piece that it will encourage open conversations about these serious issues and mental illness, as we all struggle at times.

The performance can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/rB0usciHcyk

Our friends at the Centre for Suicide Prevention (CSP) have recently published guidelines for sharing experiences with suicide.

Their guide provides suggestions and considerations for those impacted by suicide who would like to publicly share their experiences.

Recognizing that people who have been impacted by suicide, either through a suicide loss or a suicide attempt, may derive a lot of strength and growth by sharing their experience, these guidelines encourage public sharing of experiences that will be safe for everyone to hear.

The CSP’s guidelines can be found at: https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/guidelines-for-sharing-experiences-with-suicide/
CASP’S HEALING DAY
HELD VIRTUALLY IN 2020

Started in 2019 as a pre-conference event at CASP’s annual, national conference, this year’s Healing Event was held virtually on October 27, 2020.

The Healing Event, accessible to anyone impacted by suicide (ideation, attempts, loss, etc), was designed to be experiential—a time for reflection, expression and connection.

The main purpose of the event was to provide the opportunity for those with lived experience to come together in a safe space and, through creativity, the arts and mindfulness exercises, connect with their thoughts and feelings and to explore new ways of engaging with and honouring their journey. The session also incorporated an Indigenous perspective and included breakout activities which were provided in both English and French.

If you haven’t already done so, sign up for our Newsletter to receive updates on our events and activities!

Go to:

suicideprevention.ca/NEWSLET-TER-SIGN-UP
MOTION PASSED TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL 3-DIGIT SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

On December 11, 2020, the House of Commons unanimously passed M.P. Todd Doherty’s motion to establish a national three-digit suicide prevention hotline.

The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP) supports and commends the recent, unanimously approved motion by the House of Commons to establish a 3-digit suicide prevention hotline. This dedicated line will assist in increasing access to crisis support, where and when it’s needed. We look forward to the details around implementation as they emerge and are hopeful the hotline comes into being as part of an integrated, comprehensive and funded mental health strategy.

CASP TESTIFIES AT SENATE COMMITTEE HEARING ON BILL C-7

The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs recently held several days of hearings via videoconference to examine the subject matter of Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying). On November 24, 2020, Sean Krausert, CASP’s Executive Director, was asked to be a witness and provide comments on behalf of CASP.

CASP has particular interest in MAiD to ensure that it does not overlap with what is traditionally understood as suicide and continues to protect those suffering from mental illness from a medically assisted pre-mature death that could be avoided by adequate treatment and care.

CASP became genuinely concerned after the Truchon case left the door wide open for possible interpretation of any number of non-life-threatening afflictions, including mental illness, as grievous and irremediable and, therefore, eligible to seek MAiD. Earlier this year, CASP completed a literature review and consultation to help formulate its Statement on the Expansion of Medical Assistance in Dying to those without Reasonably Foreseeable Death.


CONGRATS TO CASP BOARD MEMBER DR. JUVERIA ZAHEER!

One of CASP’s newest Board Members, Dr. Juveria Zaheer was named to Canada’s Top 40 Under 40 List for 2020.

An annual recognition of exceptional achievements of 40 outstanding Canadians under the age of 40, Dr. Zaheer, a CAMH ER Clinician and Suicide Researcher, was recognized for her groundbreaking research, inclusive mentorship and clinical expertise.

Congratulations Juveria on this outstanding achievement!