

# Suicide and Vision Impairment



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# Suicide in America

- In 2022 there were 49,499 suicides in the United States
- 51 lightning deaths (last 20 year average)
- 3,398 fire-related deaths
- 4,508 drownings
- 19,510 homicides
- 40,464 motor vehicle deaths
- 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death, 2<sup>nd</sup> for adolescents and young adults



# Changes in the last decade

- Rate has gone up every year for more than the last decade until 2019
- Overall rate: + 23%
- Ages 15 – 24: + 45%
- Ages 45 – 54: + 8%
- Age 65+: + 14%
- Men: + 21%
- Women: + 29%
- Non-white: + 26%



Original Investigation | Public Health

## Visual Impairment and Suicide Risk A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Chung Young Kim, MD; Ahnul Ha, MD; Sung Ryul Shim, PhD; In Hwan Hong, MD, PhD; In Boem Chang, MD, PhD; Young Kook Kim, MD, PhD

- New meta-analysis (study of studies)
  - 31 population-based studies of over 5.6 million people
    - Suicidal ideation OR = 2.01
    - Suicide attempt OR = 2.49
    - Death by suicide OR = 1.89
    - Age was associated with adolescents at highest risk

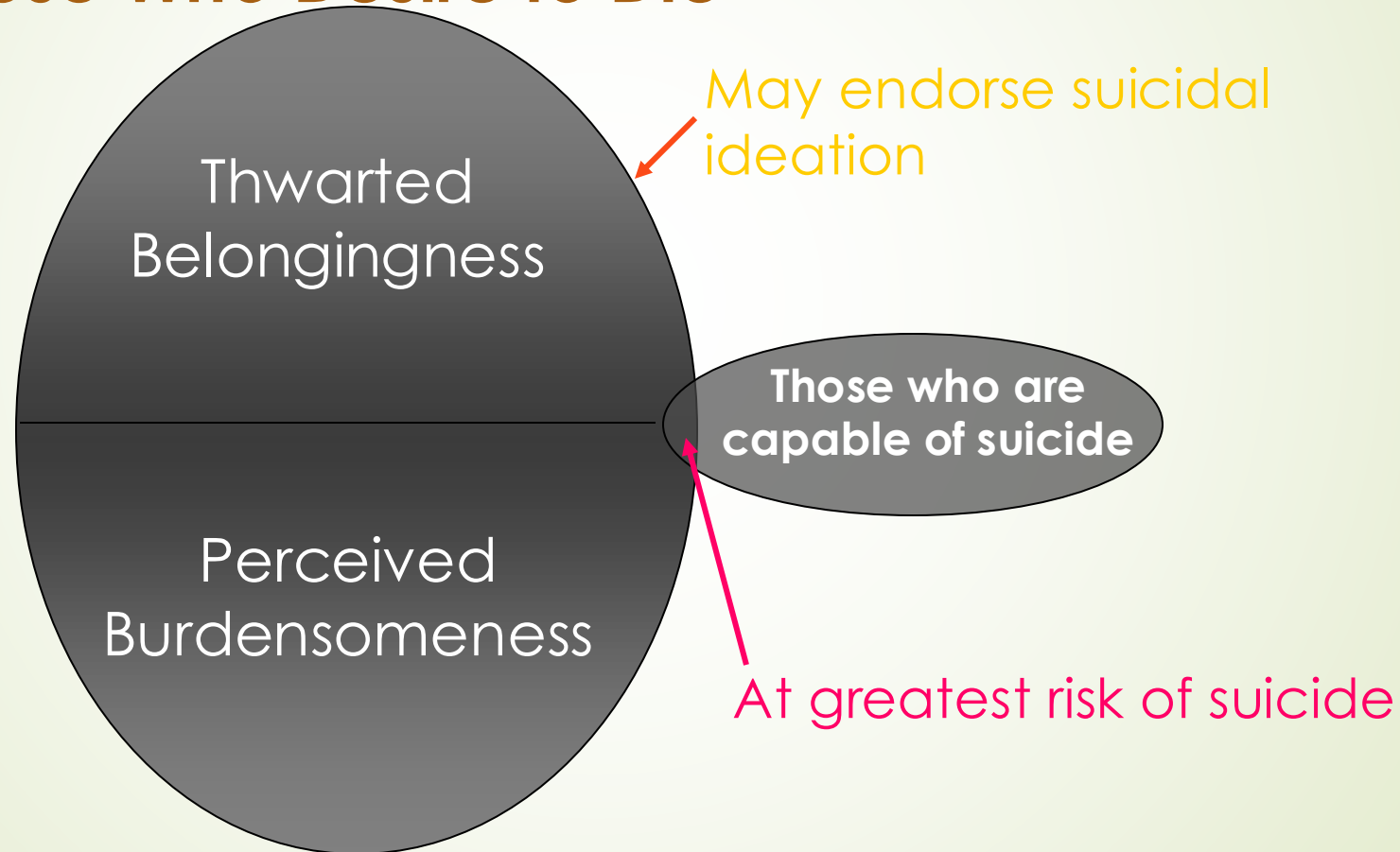


# Suicide acceptability and disability

- Vignette based study that described different challenges and asked how acceptable suicide would be
- Each vignette had a disability and no-disability condition
- Suicidality was viewed as more acceptable for those with a disability, including by those who reported having a disability

# Joiner's Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior

## Those Who Desire to Die



# Emile Durkheim

- ▶ Emphasized collective social forces and dismissed most other factors
- ▶ Disturbed regulation of the individual by society

Two basic types of regulation:

## 1) Social integration

- Low integration = “**egoistic**” - when people feel like they don't belong, purposeless and become desperate
  - \* Similar to Joiner's concept of belongingness
- High integration = “**altruistic**” – Excessive integration leads people to lose themselves and to commit to a larger goal
  - \* Similar to Joiner's concept of burdensomeness

## 2) Moral regulation

- Low regulation = “**anomic**” - Sudden changes in the social position of an individual due to abrupt changes in society lead to a lack of social direction
- High regulation = “**fatalistic**” – Occurs among people who live overregulated, unrewarding lives.



# Aaron Beck

- ▶ Emphasized the role of hopelessness
  - ▶ In one study Beck and colleagues correctly identified 91% of those who later died by suicide.
  - ▶ Those with high hopelessness were 11 times more likely to die by suicide than those with lower scores.
- ▶ Joiner believes that hopelessness doesn't tell the whole story and is not sufficient for suicidal behavior.
  - ▶ Hopelessness about belongingness and burdensomeness is required, together with the acquired capability for serious self-harm

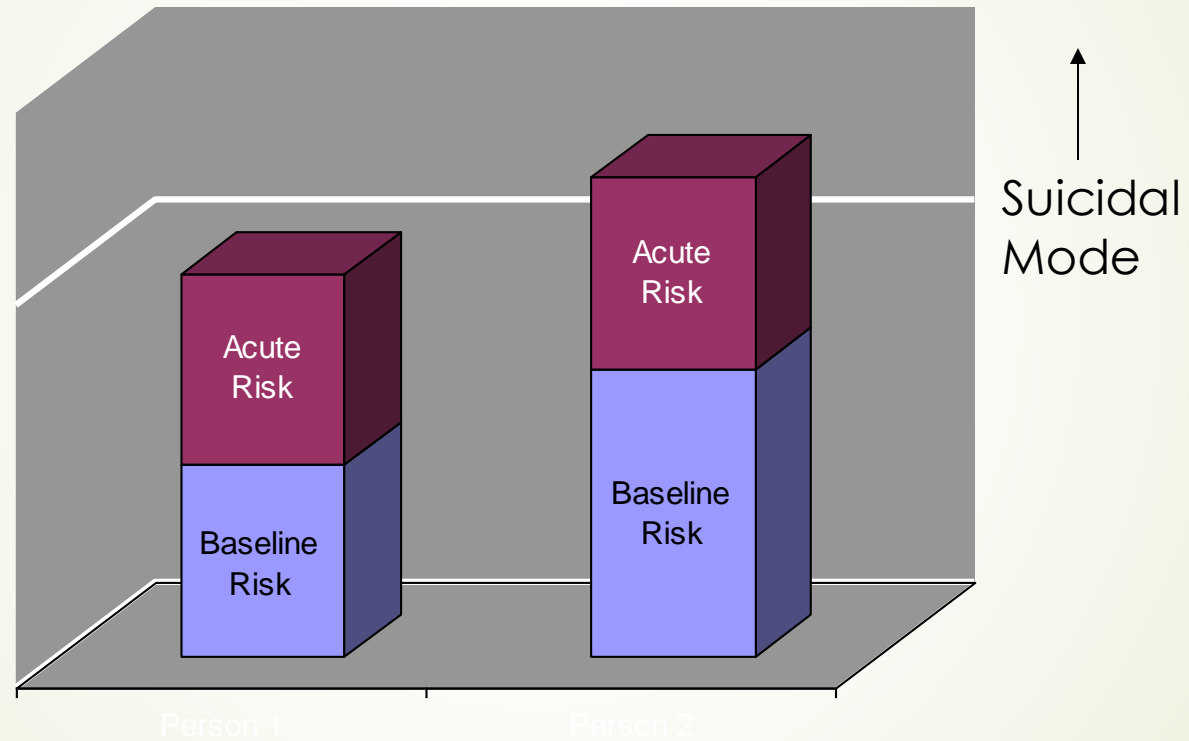




# David Rudd

- ▶ Fluid Vulnerability Model
  - ▶ Suicidal episodes are time-limited.
  - ▶ Risk factors that both trigger a suicidal episode and determine the duration and severity of an episode are fluid.
  - ▶ Imminent risk cannot endure beyond periods of heightened arousal.
  - ▶ Baseline risk varies from person to person.

# Fluid Vulnerability Model



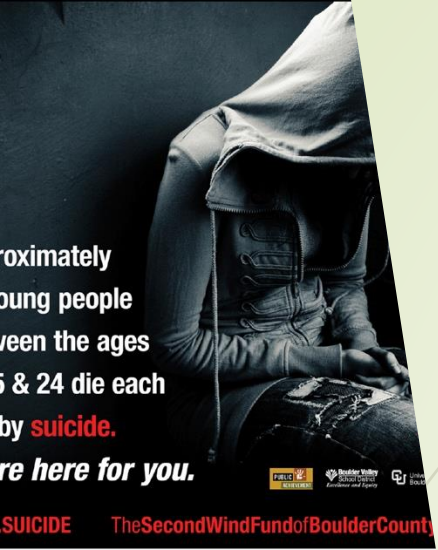
Adapted from Rudd, 2006



## 3 strategies we will discuss for lay audiences:

- Public awareness ads
- Positive affirmations/small interventions
- Assistance with problem solving/adaptation

# Public awareness ads




- Effectiveness of campaigns rarely evaluated
- Studies have shown modest effects on attitudes about the causes of mental illness and treatment
- “have no detectable effect on primary outcomes of decreasing suicidal acts or on intermediate measures, such as more treatment seeking or increased antidepressant use” (Mann, et al., 2005)





# Caring Letters

- ▶ A study led by Jerome Motto sent brief caring postal letters following treatment discharge (initially monthly, tapering to quarterly) for five years.
- ▶ Compared to those who had no further contact, the caring letters group had a significantly lower suicide rate for the first two years of the trial
- ▶ Related interventions using phone calls, texting, and post cards have been shown to reduce suicidal behavior



# Assistance with problem solving/adaptation

- ▶ How do we help the individual overcome their challenges?
  - ▶ Educating/linking with adaptive devices
    - ▶ Be My Eyes app
  - ▶ Linking with someone with a similar background
    - ▶ Facebook groups, support groups
    - ▶ Blind ally therapists
  - ▶ Helping the person continue to find meaning and hope

ANY  
QUESTIONS

