

## Mind the Gap: Innovative Peer-Led Prevention

### Session Co-Presenters:

Daniel C. Adams, M.A., BPh, BTh, National Trainer, Sources of Strength. I am a suicide prevention advocate.

Janell A. Anema, M.A., B.A., National Trainer, Sources of Strength. I am a suicide prevention advocate.

Various Peer Leaders (High School Aged) and Adult Advisors, currently participating in local implementations of Sources of Strength in Denver Metro Area Schools.

This Session is directed at an audience of those working on Prevention Efforts at a beginner/intermediate level.

This presentation is a one-hour breakout session. This session has not been given before. Daniel Adams is a first time presenter at BtD, and Janell Anema was a co-presenter in a breakout session at the 2016 Bridging the Divide Conference, entitled *Resilience: Collective and Compassionate Approaches*, along with Ernie Duff of the Aurora Strong Resilience Center and Laurie Reeder of Aurora Mental Health. That presentation focused on resilience, and the intersections of community, clinical and compassionate approaches. This presentation is a programmatic exploration of Sources of Strength, an evidence-based suicide prevention program, as it fills the gaps most often seen in suicide prevention.

At the conclusion of this presentation, the participant should be able to identify gaps in traditional suicide prevention programming. The participant will be able to demonstrate understanding of concrete strategies for bridging the gaps commonly found in suicide prevention programs and practices, and will be able to distinguish between Hope, Help, and Strength messaging strategies, as opposed to Sad, Shock, Trauma messaging campaigns.

**Abstract:** Sources of Strength is a radically strength-based, comprehensive suicide prevention program. Sources uses teams of Peer Leaders mentored by Adult Advisors to change peer social norms about help-seeking behaviors, increase trust and connection between young people and adults, and encourage students to individually assess and develop strengths in their life.

Developed in 1998, out of the grassroots efforts of founder Mark LoMurray, in and among rural and Native communities in North Dakota, Sources of Strength has grown to be a national model of effective teen suicide prevention. A key element of reaching zero suicide in Colorado is peer-led prevention efforts, and Sources of Strength is the first program of its kind to prove that Peer Leaders can be used to change population level health norms. At this point, Sources of Strength is the most rigorously evaluated peer-led suicide prevention program in the world.

We have identified three major gaps in traditional suicide prevention programming; 1) lack of young people involved in “teen suicide prevention”, 2) risk-focused

programming, and 3) Sad, Shock, Trauma messaging. We will examine the gaps and then propose solutions; 1) Peer-led Prevention, partnered with trusted adults, 2) strength-focused programming, and 3) Hope, Help, Strength messaging. We will highlight both the philosophy behind and the practical implementation of Sources of Strength, as this unique and innovative program fills the gaps.

This session will also pull from real life stories and examples, featuring a small panel of Peer Leaders and Adult Advisors, currently participating on Sources of Strength teams in the Denver Metro Area. Our Peer Leaders and Adult Advisors will share stories of connection, empowerment, and their capacities to shift culture and climate around early help-seeking and positive social messaging. We will use dyad sharing, large group discussion, and an opportunity to create their own Hope, Help, Strength messaging campaign, to engage and instruct those in attendance