



# breakout sessions

## Lived Experience Track - Ascent Center Room 130

**THURSDAY, MAY 18**

### **Empowering Mental Fitness Through Our Lived Experiences**

**11:00 am - 12:00 pm**

*Speaker:* Angilina Taylor, Aspen Strong Executive Director

*Panelists:*

Caitlyn Johnson, Student | Christina King, Founder, Aspen Strong | Lindsey Lupow, Program Director, Aspen Strong | Paddy O'Connell, Writer and Aspen Strong Board Member

*This panel will use personal stories to explore suicidal ideation and the journey to mental wellness. Led by a high school student with personal experience of depression and anxiety, the panelists will share their stories of mental defeat and discuss the small acts that brought them to a place where they could share and advocate for mental fitness. The aim is to destigmatize mental health issues and highlight research showing that coping skills are crucial to resilience. By educating young people about mental fitness and encouraging people, place, and purpose as a form of medicine, the panel hopes to shift towards a mental health model that emphasizes prevention and empowerment.*

### **The Why Question & the Healing Power of Narrative**

**1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**

*Speaker:* Jay E. Valusek, MS, MEd, Suicide Bereavement Specialist, BPS Health Strategies

*This session is intended to help suicide loss survivors "regain their equilibrium" by demonstrating a practical (albeit challenging) approach to answering the question that haunts those bereaved by suicide: Why did this happen?*

**FRIDAY, MAY 19**

### **Our Three Lives: Real-life Accounts of Overcoming Suicide and Grief**

**10:30 am - 11:30 am**

*Speakers:*

Sienna, S, Adams, Educational Speaker | Gail L Sanchez, Educational Speaker | JB Sanchez, Mental Health advocate, and survivor

*The state of Colorado is facing a serious issue with suicide being the leading cause of death for young people between 15-24 years old. The current generation is exposed to constant negativity through world events and social media, which is affecting how they process life. To combat this issue, the presenters aim to educate the audience on the stigma surrounding mental health and promote more awareness about mental illnesses. By sharing their personal experiences with suicidal ideation, survival, grief, and mental health challenges, the presenters hope to change the outlook on mental health disorders and challenges and encourage a more supportive culture.*

### **Remembrance Ceremony**

**1:00 pm - 2:00 pm**

*Speaker:* Erin Ivie, SpeakUp ReachOut

*This session will be a Sharing Hope Ceremony. This ceremony is a time to remember those that we have lost to suicide. Each participant will be provided with a butterfly cutout to decorate and inscribe as they choose to remember their loved one. We will then share our butterflies with the group through a hope ceremony originally penned by LaRita Archibald the founder of HEARTBEAT (with permission).*

**Enhancing our Social Environments as a Suicide Prevention Strategy**