



Welcome to the first issue of the Healing Hearts newsletter. Each month we will bring you education on emotional wellness, encouragement grounded in Scripture, one practical tool you can use this week, and trusted places to turn for help — because no one here should have to carry a hard season alone.

This month's theme

Suicide Prevention & Hope



Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Psalms 42:11 (NIV)

🕯️ 1 A Word on This Month's Theme

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. We open our first issue here deliberately. Silence around suicide has never protected anyone; it has only left people alone with it. The psalmist speaks to his own downcast soul without pretending it is well — and then turns it toward hope. That is the pattern we want: honest about the weight, unashamed about the help, anchored in hope. If this topic touches something personal for you, read at your own pace, and know the crisis numbers below are always available.

📖 2 Mental Health Education: Understanding Suicide Risk

Suicide is rarely the result of a single event. It usually emerges where several pressures converge — untreated depression or another mental health condition, chronic pain or serious illness, substance use, isolation, financial collapse, relationship loss, or unresolved trauma. Most people experiencing suicidal thoughts do not want to die. They want the pain to stop and have lost sight of another way to make that happen.

That distinction points toward what helps. Suicidal crisis is usually time-limited and intensely ambivalent, and people who receive support during that window overwhelmingly go on to live. What research consistently shows:¹⁻⁴

- Asking someone directly about suicide does not plant the idea; it lowers distress and opens the way to help.
- Putting time and distance between a person and the means of harm meaningfully reduces risk. If you are worried, ask what is in the home and help make it less accessible.
- Depression is highly treatable, and most people improve with therapy, medication, or both.
- Ongoing contact matters. A text, a call, or a seat saved on Sunday is protective, not trivial.

Risk is not a character flaw or a failure of faith. It is a health crisis, and it responds to care.

✝️ 3 Faith & Wellness: Hope in Difficult Seasons

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalms 34:18 (NIV)

Scripture does not require us to perform wellness. Elijah asked to die beneath the broom tree, and God's response was not rebuke — it was food, sleep, and a quiet presence, followed in time by a word and a companion. Rest, nourishment, and community came before instruction.

Hope is not optimism. Optimism predicts a good outcome; hope holds on when the outcome is unknown. It is possible to be a faithful believer and still find the morning hard. Doubt in a dark season is not the opposite of faith — despair with no one to tell is far more dangerous.

God's care reaches us through many hands: the counselor who listens, the physician who adjusts a medication, the crisis counselor who answers at 3 a.m., the friend who drives you to an appointment. These are not detours around faith. They are often how the God who is close to the brokenhearted draws near.

Prayer for Hope

Lord, for everyone reading this who is worn thin: meet them where they are. Give rest to weary bodies and quiet to restless minds. Where hope has gone dim, hold it for them until they can carry it again. Send them one person to tell, and give us the courage to be that person for someone else. Amen.

4 Know the Signs

Most people give some indication that they are struggling. Changes lasting two weeks or more deserve a caring conversation:

- Talking about being a burden, feeling trapped, or having no reason to go on
- Withdrawal from church, family, friends, or activities once enjoyed
- Marked changes in sleep, appetite, weight, or personal care
- Increased alcohol or substance use
- Giving away meaningful possessions, or unexplained "putting affairs in order"
- Sudden calm or relief after a long stretch of despair
- Irritability, agitation, or uncharacteristic recklessness
- Searching for or acquiring means of harm

Trust the small signal. Concerns are often dismissed because "it's probably nothing." A caring question costs very little when you are wrong and can change everything when you are right.

5 Practical Tip: How to Ask the Hard Question

You do not need clinical training to help someone. You need willingness, a private moment, and a plan for what comes next.

- 1 **Choose the moment.** Private and unhurried. A walk or a drive is often easier than sitting face to face.
- 2 **Name what you have noticed.** "You haven't seemed like yourself lately, and I've been thinking about you."
- 3 **Ask plainly.** "Are you thinking about suicide?" Say the word — vague phrasing gives people room to deflect.
- 4 **Listen without fixing.** Do not argue or minimize. "I'm glad you told me" is more useful than advice.
- 5 **Ask about safety.** If they are in danger, ask what is in the home, help create distance from it, and do not leave them alone.
- 6 **Connect to help.** Call or text 988 together, or drive them. If there is immediate danger, call 911.
- 7 **Follow up.** Check in tomorrow, and next week. Sustained contact is among the most protective things you can offer.

Never promise to keep suicidal thoughts secret. Say plainly that you care too much to carry it alone, and get help involved.

6 Family, Caregiver & Youth Corner

- **Presence beats solutions.** Sitting with someone says more than any argument for why life is worth living.
- **Offer specific help.** "I'll bring dinner Thursday" is easier to accept than "let me know if you need anything."
- **Expect uneven progress.** Recovery moves in fits and starts; a hard week is not a failure.
- **Watch the transitions.** The weeks after a hospital discharge or a medication change warrant closer contact, not less.
- **Get your own support.** Caregiver fatigue is cumulative. You need someone to talk to as well.

If you have lost someone to suicide, that grief carries its own weight. Survivor support groups exist for exactly this, and reaching for one is an act of strength.

Kids & Teen Korner

Young people notice more than adults assume. Silence about mental health does not protect them — it teaches them the subject is unspeakable, which is the last thing we want when they need to speak.

For parents: starting the conversation

- Ask about feelings the way you ask about school. Regular, low-pressure questions make the hard conversation possible later.
- Watch for changes lasting two weeks or more: sleeping far more or less, dropping friends or activities, slipping grades, irritability, giving away belongings, or talk of being a burden.
- If you are worried, ask directly: "Are you thinking about suicide?" It does not plant the idea, and it tells your child the subject is not forbidden.
- Respond to what you hear without panic or punishment. A calm reaction is what makes the next disclosure possible.
- Know what is happening online. Cyberbullying, comparison, and late-night scrolling all affect mood and sleep. Charge phones outside the bedroom.

For teens: if a friend tells you something scary

- Take it seriously, every time. Do not decide it is for attention.
- Do not promise to keep it secret. Say instead: "I care about you too much to be the only one who knows."
- Stay with them and get an adult involved — a parent, school counselor, coach, or youth leader.
- Text or call 988 together, or text HOME to 741741. You can do it while sitting right next to them.
- Afterward, tell someone how you are doing. Carrying a friend's crisis is heavy, and it is not yours to hold alone.

Where young people can turn

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text) · Crisis Text Line, text HOME to 741741 · your school counselor · Clarity Child Guidance Center, 210-616-0300 · or any Healing Hearts team member, who can help a family find care. Parents and youth are always welcome to write us at healinghearts@salivingfaith.org.

11 Crisis Reminder — Keep This Where You Can Find It

911	Immediate danger to life or safety, or a medical emergency
988 — call or text	Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Free, confidential, 24/7
988, then press 1	Veterans Crisis Line
Text HOME to 741741	Crisis Text Line
210-223-7233	Bexar County 24-hour crisis line (adults); 210-225-5481 for children
1-800-799-7233	National Domestic Violence Hotline (text START to 88788)
Call or text 211	2-1-1 Texas — food, housing, utilities, local assistance



988lifeline.org Find a support group



You do not need to be in immediate danger to call 988. It is also there for anyone who is struggling, and for anyone worried about someone else.

7 Community Resource Spotlight

Starting points for care in our area. Healing Hearts does not endorse or supervise outside providers; please verify services, eligibility, and cost directly.

Crisis & Behavioral Health

The Center for Health Care Services, Bexar County — 24-hour crisis line 210-223-7233; intake 210-261-2427. Walk-in crisis care available.

Counseling

Family Service Association, family-service.org

Suicide Loss & Grief

AFSP survivor groups, afsp.org · GriefShare, griefshare.org

Veterans & Military Families

Veterans Crisis Line — 988, press 1 · Audie L. Murphy VA Medical Center · Vet Centers for readjustment counseling

Youth & Families

Clarity Child Guidance Center, 210-616-0300

Substance Use

SAMHSA National Helpline, 1-800-662-4357 · Local AA, NA, and Celebrate Recovery meetings

Basic Needs

2-1-1 Texas — call or text 211 for food, rent, utilities, transportation · San Antonio Food Bank, 210-431-8326

Safety at Home

Family Violence Prevention Services, 210-733-8810 · National hotline, 1-800-799-7233

8 Healing Hearts Ministry Update

Healing Hearts was formed because our congregation, like every congregation, holds more quiet suffering than it shows on Sunday morning. This ministry exists so that no one carries it alone.

Our team is made up of trained lay members serving under the oversight of Pastor K. Love. Team members complete training in mental health, listening skills, confidentiality, and referral procedures before serving, and continue with ongoing education throughout the year.

What we offer: a confidential listening presence; prayer and spiritual encouragement; education for individuals, families, and caregivers; connection to counselors, support groups, and community agencies, including help making the first call; and follow-up, so you are not handed a phone number and forgotten.

On confidentiality: what you share with a team member is held in confidence, with limits we want you to know in advance. If there is risk of harm to you or someone else, or a situation involving abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, we are obligated to involve appropriate help — and we will tell you when that happens.

How to reach us: speak with any team member after service, or contact Healing Hearts at healinghearts@salivingfaith.org. Requests are typically answered within 48 hours.

When Ministry Support Isn't Enough

Healing Hearts offers companionship, prayer, education, and connection to resources. We do not provide therapy, diagnosis, medical care, or crisis intervention. Please seek professional support when symptoms persist beyond a few weeks or worsen; when there are thoughts of suicide, self-harm, or harming someone else; when substances have become a way to cope; when daily functioning is breaking down; when past trauma keeps intruding on the present; when a medical cause may be involved; or when safety at home is a concern. Our team is glad to help you take that step, including making the first call with you.

9 Upcoming Events

No ministry events are scheduled at this time. As support groups, workshops, and trainings are established, they will be announced here and in the Sunday bulletin.

If there is a group or workshop you would like to see offered — grief support, caregiver support, or mental health training — please tell us. Interest from the congregation shapes what we build first. Write to healinghearts@salivingfaith.org.

10 Monthly Challenge: 30 Days of Hope

One small act of hope each day, for thirty days.

Week One — Reach out. Each day, contact one person you have not spoken with recently. A text counts. Prioritize anyone who has gone quiet.

Week Two — Learn. Save 988 in your phone. Read "Know the Signs" with your household.

Week Three — Speak hope. Each day, tell one person what they mean to you. Say the thing you assume they already know.

Week Four — Tend your own heart. One honest sentence a day, in a journal or in prayer, about how you actually are.

Day 30 — Pass it on. Give this newsletter, or the 988 number, to someone who may need it.

Share your experience at healinghearts@salivingfaith.org. Reflections may appear in a future issue with permission and without identifying details.

12 A Closing Word

Whatever you are carrying into this month, you are not a burden to this congregation. If today is heavy, you do not have to hold it alone or wait until you can explain it well. Tell someone. Call 988. Sit in the back pew and say nothing at all — you are welcome exactly like that.

May God grant you rest for your body, quiet for your mind, and one person this week who is glad you told them. There is more ahead of you than you can see from here.

Sources

1. Dazzi T, et al. Does asking about suicide and related behaviours induce suicidal ideation? *Psychological Medicine*, 2014.
2. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Means Matter — hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter; Suicide Prevention Resource Center, sprc.org.
3. National Institute of Mental Health, Depression — nimh.nih.gov.
4. Motto JA, Bostrom AG. A randomized controlled trial of postcrisis suicide prevention. *Psychiatric Services*, 2001; and subsequent caring-contacts research.

Healing Hearts Ministry provides faith-based support, education, encouragement, and community resources. Healing Hearts does not provide psychotherapy, diagnosis, medical treatment, or crisis intervention.

If you are in crisis, call or text 988. If there is immediate danger, call 911.

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