

# September 2024 Mental Health First Aid Newsletter

## Dates & Events:

- National Suicide Awareness Month
- National Self-care Awareness Month
- National Self-Improvement Month
- National Friendship Month
- Animal Pain Awareness Month
- Happy Cat Month
- National Guide Dog Month
- 9<sup>th</sup> – R U OK Day
- 10<sup>th</sup> – World Suicide Prevention Day
- 13<sup>th</sup> – Positive Thinking Day
- 21<sup>st</sup> – World Gratitude Day
- 26<sup>th</sup> – Remember Me (Shelter pets)
- 28<sup>th</sup> – World Rabies Day



## IAVPM – Animal Pain Awareness Month

Educating owners about pet pain then enables pets to live happier lives.

Elanco has a variety of pain management options for our canine and feline friends.



## National Guide Dog Month

Elanco is a proud supporter of dogs, inc (previously Southeastern Guide Dogs).

For more information: <https://dogsinc.org>

In honor of National Guide Dog Month, find an organization to support in your community.



## September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Suicide is a difficult topic to think about, let alone talk about. As uncomfortable and awkward as it might be for you to ask someone about suicide, it is nothing compared to the pain and suffering of someone having suicidal thoughts. Asking someone, "Are you thinking about suicide" or "Are you thinking about killing yourself," can **save a life**. Those questions can shine a light in the dark place, letting that person know that they are not alone and that *there is hope for recovery and relief from their situation*.

There are many warning signs for suicide. Each person has their own set of signs. Letting someone know that you noticed something shows them you care about them and that they matter. Signs include talking about or making plans for suicide, acting anxious or agitated, behaving recklessly, talking about being a burden to others, talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain, giving away possessions (including pets), increasing the use of alcohol or drugs, talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live, sleeping too little or too much, withdrawing or feeling isolated, showing rage or talking about seeking revenge or displaying extreme mood swings.<sup>2</sup>

It is estimated that there are currently more than 700,000 suicides per year worldwide, and we know that each suicide profoundly affects many more people. Suicide remains a critical global issue, affecting individuals and communities worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

"**Changing the Narrative on Suicide**"<sup>2</sup> is the theme for this year's suicide awareness month.

"Changing the narrative means fostering empathy and compassion for those who are struggling. It means understanding that suicidal thoughts and feelings are a sign of immense pain and distress but talking about suicidal thoughts does not increase their presence or occurrence. It means listening without judgment, offering support, and guiding individuals towards help."<sup>3</sup>

What you can do: (1) ask, (2) be there, (3) help keep them safe, 4) help them connect, and (5) follow up.<sup>1</sup>

**Veterinary medicine** has a higher-than-average rate of suicide than the general population. It is NOT the profession with the highest rate of suicide. We need to be honest and open about this issue. There are many reasons for the pain and suffering that we feel and that can lead to mental health issues, including suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Data shows that students entering the profession already have significant depression and anxiety. Add onto that, what we deal with everyday plus the lack of training in how to manage ourselves for resiliency, the outcome is sad indeed. Yet, it does not have to be this way. **As a profession, we must prioritize and standardize our own self-care rather than stigmatize it.** Only then, when we care about the caregiver, can we save ourselves.

There are many resources to help yourself and to help others, i.e., AVMA, your State VMA, QPR training, MHFA, and *The Betterinary Series*.

988 is confidential, free, and available 24/7/365, connecting those experiencing a mental health, substance use, or suicidal crisis with trained crisis counselors. Access is available through every land line, cell phone, and voice-over internet device in the United States and call services are available in Spanish, along with interpretation services in over 150 languages.<sup>3</sup>

Other resources are NAMI, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), and SAMHSA .



## Mental Health is a Global Issue

**RUOK** is an Australian initiative that focuses on creating awareness around Mental Health. Asking someone if they are OK and shows that you care. That simple question can have a profound and positive impact on someone who is struggling



MHFA was founded in Australia and has since been adopted in over 30 countries. This training helps you understand The signs and symptoms of someone struggling with a mental health challenge or crisis, including suicide.

Elanco supports this training for its employees. If you are interested in certification, you can sign up for a course by contacting Dr. Heidi Hulon. To date, over 200 US employees and veterinary customers have been certified in MHFA.



## Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the top ten positive emotions we can experience.

Gratitude is about recognizing, acknowledging and appreciating something good that has come our way.

This simple act has significant impact on our wellbeing as it can increase happiness by 25%! This is due to the release of serotonin in our brains.

Expressing gratitude could shift someone's day from bad to good. That could change a day and a life.

THANK YOU for all that you do!

## Positive Thinking

1. Use positive affirmations. No negative self-talk or criticism. Be optimistic and realistic where appropriate.
2. Seek the Good. Our minds are programmed to focus on the negative. Retrain them to see the good around you.
3. Give to others and share some positive emotions - compassion, love, joy, amusement and gratitude.
4. Be Mindful of the Moment. Focus on the here and now – don't worry about the future or lament on the past.
5. Support yourself with people that lift you up – in good and in difficult times.

## SELF-CARE!

Self-care refers to activities that aid in a person's wellbeing and resiliency.

It is unique to each person and is not something we should feel guilty about.

### Standardize not Stigmatize!

This month find ways to practice self-care in all 8 dimensions of wellbeing: **Emotional, Physical, Mental, Social, Spiritual, Financial, Occupational, Environmental**

Ref:  
1. [https://irp.cdn-webside.com/9b3cab55/files/uploaded/IVAPM-Signs-of-Pain-Poster\\_Photo-2019\\_final-8-6-19.pdf](https://irp.cdn-webside.com/9b3cab55/files/uploaded/IVAPM-Signs-of-Pain-Poster_Photo-2019_final-8-6-19.pdf)  
2. <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/suicidal-behavior>  
3. <https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/988messaging/framework>

Images:  
1. [https://irp.cdn-webside.com/9b3cab55/files/uploaded/IVAPM-Signs-of-Pain-Poster\\_Photo-2019\\_final-8-6-19.pdf](https://irp.cdn-webside.com/9b3cab55/files/uploaded/IVAPM-Signs-of-Pain-Poster_Photo-2019_final-8-6-19.pdf)  
2. <https://afsp.org/national-suicide-prevention-week/>  
3. <https://www.iasp.info/2024/05/15/worldsuicidepreventionday2024/#:~:text=Suicide%20remains%20a%20critical%20global.Changing%20the%20Narrative%20on%20Suicide%E2%80%9D.>  
4. <https://www.thehealthsite.com/photo-gallery/world-gratitude-day-how-gratitude-can-help-you-stay-mentally-healthy-1012167/world-gratitude-day-2022-1012172/>  
5. <https://www.ruok.org.au/r-u-ok-day>  
6. [https://content.app-sources.com/s/1747980659508095/uploads/Blloom\\_Logo/Gratitude\\_Blog-5115067.png?format=webp](https://content.app-sources.com/s/1747980659508095/uploads/Blloom_Logo/Gratitude_Blog-5115067.png?format=webp)