EMBRACE’S MISSION
To ensure people with mental illness are respected, empowered, and able to access appropriate care without the constraints of lack of knowledge, shame or limited resources through positive representation, supportive community programs, alliances with policymakers and financial assistance.
A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

My wife’s brother, Michael, died of suicide at the age of 19. At the time, they said ‘he died from a car accident’ and technically he did. He had locked himself in his car and asphyxiated himself with its fumes. Many years later, his death still impacts our family. It is this personal tragedy that provided the inspiration for why we founded Embrace.

I also recall a dark personal period while in my residency training when I questioned if life was worth living. I was then bereaving my mother’s death 15 years earlier. Thankfully I went through it with the support of my psychotherapist and my brother and his wife. People from all walks of life are at risk for mental illness and at risk of suicide. The fortunate of us, we find a way through.

The World Health Organization just released an official report on suicide across the world. It estimated that 1 million people die from suicide every year. It is the third leading cause of death of individuals between the age of 15 and 24. This means that, every 40 seconds, a person dies from suicide in the world. This means at least 3 died since you began reading this page. But it is a big world and when numbers turn into the millions, they lose their relevance to us as individuals.

Suicide statistics in Lebanon are alarming. Every 2.5 days, someone dies from suicide. What makes it even more relevant to us, is that we live in a small country with very tight communities.

(Continued on page 2)
A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The death of 150 Lebanese lovers, mothers, fathers, friends, daughters and sons in Lebanon is a number that impacts us all. Unfortunately, we have credible reasons to believe that this distressing rate is an underestimation: The social, religious and legal aspects of our culture bias the reporting of suicide cases.

Allow me to share with you some misconceptions about suicide.

It is a myth that people who die of suicide really wish to die. The truth is they want to end the pain they are feeling. Not their life.

It is a myth that people who attempt suicide are weak, selfish or just trying to get attention. The truth is, the large majority of suicide cases are sadly a result of treatable mental illness like depression, drug or alcohol dependence, and schizophrenia.

It is a myth that asking or talking about suicide can cause someone to attempt suicide. The truth is, this is why we are here today. In 2013, we felt it was time to take the conversation about mental health and mental illness to a larger audience. We launched Embrace and "فكوا العقدة" campaign”. The “3e2deh” is in the society not the individual. One in 4 Lebanese is bound to suffer a serious mental illness in their lifetime. If it is not you, then someone you care about.” Today, Embrace’s work over the past 3 years to launch the first suicide prevention hotline, Embrace LifeLine, has become a reality.

To all who have been working tirelessly over the years, the Ministry of Public Health, Lebanese Order of Physicians, the Lebanese Psychiatric Society, the Lebanese Psychological Association, the countless NGO’s, thank you for all your efforts. Embrace joins you in the mission to cultivate an environment in which those Lebanese living with mental illness feel comfortable seeking help, treatment and support on their journey toward recovery.

You are all now soldiers of Embrace. You should know, this may be the last truly stigmatized area of medicine. It used to be that way with cancer and epilepsy and, with your help, we can change this.

Sincerely,
Dr. Ziad Nahas
President of Embrace
OVERVIEW

Embrace is a non-governmental organization (NGO) and an awareness support network, specialized in mental health and suicide prevention across Lebanon. It was first established in 2013 at the Psychiatry Department of the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), as a personal initiative led by Dr. Ziad Nahas and his wife, Michella Nahas.

In 2017, with the support of a growing network of partners, volunteers, donors and friends, Embrace became an independent Lebanese Non-Profit Organization (Registration Number: 1676).

As a result of the continuous efforts of the team, Embrace launched the first national suicide prevention and emotional support helpline in Lebanon in September 2017, named the Embrace Lifeline (1564).

For more on Embrace, visit www.embracefund.org
For more on the Embrace Lifeline, visit www.embracelifeline.org

VISION

Embrace aspires to be the leading mental health organization in Lebanon and the region through mental health awareness and advocacy.
BOARD MEMBERS

Mia Atoui
Nabil Younes
Omar Ghosn
Pia Zeinoun
Ziad Nahas

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Bushra Salha
Dany Dahdah – Baz
Dina Zameli
CORE TEAM

Pierre Issa
Wafa Saab
Ceem Haidar
Sanaa Mugharbil
Zeina El Jordi

CO-FOUNDERS

Farah Yehia
Mia Atoui
Michella Nahas
Nabil Younes
Nayla Haidar Seikal
Ziad Nahas
THE STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN LEBANON

Why is mental health and suicide prevention such an important topic?
GLOBAL FIGURES

800,000 people die of suicide per year i.e. one suicide every 40 seconds.

%87 of suicides involve at least one mental disorder¹. People with major depression are 20 times more likely to commit suicide¹.

%78 of suicides occur in low and middle income countries¹.

Research shows that for each adult who dies of suicide, there may have been more than 20 others attempting suicide¹.

Around 450 million people globally currently suffer from a mental illness¹.

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IN LEBANON

One person dies of suicide every 2.5 days and one person will attempt suicide every 6 hours.

In Lebanon, one in four people will suffer from a mental illness at some point in their life.

From 2010 till 2016, Lebanon witnessed a 18.7% increase in suicide rates.

In the year prior to 2011, 15% of 7th - 9th grade students in Lebanon seriously considered suicide and 13.5% had actually attempted.

Men are 4 times more likely to die from suicide than women, however, women are twice more likely to attempt suicide.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Embrace has set strategic long-term objectives to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of its efforts, which have been rolled out in 2017 and will continue well into 2018.

Join us in embracing this year’s achievements at the level of

- RAISING AWARENESS
- COMMUNITY ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT
- SUPPORT TO PERSONS WITH SUICIDE RISK (EMBRACE LIFE LINE)
- CAPACITY BUILDING
- FUNDRAISING
1. RAISING AWARENESS

Embrace has raised awareness on mental health issues and suicide prevention through the following ways:

**Third National Awareness Campaign: Talking Saves Lives**

In August 2017, Embrace launched its third national mental health campaign in four years, since its launch. This year’s campaign “Talking Saves Lives” raised awareness about the need to start talking about mental health and suicide. The ‘Talking Saves Lives’ campaign aims at igniting the conversation around suicide and encouraging the Lebanese community to start talking about suicide, break the silence around this societal taboo and send their messages of support to those affected by suicide.

“Talking Saves Lives” developed a microsite where community members recorded hundreds of messages of support and raised their voice on the need to discuss mental health issues openly in the community. The microsite is available and continues to be active at www.embracelifeline.org. With this platform, we hope to gather the longest sound waves of support messages to have been recorded on the topic of promoting mental health.

“Talking Saves Lives” was nominated for the Samir Kassir Foundation – Wajih Ajouz Award for excellence in social media campaigning.
‘
تأكد إنك الحياة ما بتحلى إلا معك.
KATIA ABOU NADER

‘
أنا ما يعرفك بس بحبك.
MAZEN GHOSN

‘
You are not alone,
we can get through this together.
ANONYMOUS

‘
Depression is a disease
like any other disease.
SAMIA KHOURY

‘
ما تسترسل بأفكارك توحدك,
تقاسمن معنا.
GHASSAN RAHBANI

‘
صار لازم نحكي.
TANIA GHRRA

‘
Difficult situations are always so
much harder when you have to deal
with them alone.
HAMED SINNO

‘
Even if we never talked before,
we are here for you.
MARY MARKARIAN
Municipality Engagement

Throughout 2017, Embrace collaborated with several Lebanese Municipalities, hosting meetings and events, to raise awareness on mental health issues and suicide prevention. Individuals from the community attend events to learn more about mental illness and suicide and ask questions to mental health professionals. Embrace is in the process of initiating the first nationwide Municipality awareness project.

Impact of Municipality Engagement

Events hosted in 2017:
- Bechmezzine (January 2018)
- Ghazir
- Mtein
- Shouf
- Rashaya

IN 2018
Embrace hopes to engage 12 more municipalities.
OVER 600 PEOPLE ENGAGED
(Each event was attended by 150 to 300 individuals)
University Engagement

The Embrace team, composed of mental health professionals and volunteers, conducted numerous events and activities in university campuses across Lebanon.

Notre Dame University Event
On October 12, 2017 and on the occasion of World Mental Health Day, the Department of Psychology, Education and Physical Education at NDU invited Embrace to raise awareness around mental health in Lebanon. The aim of the lecture was to provide NDU students with an opportunity to learn more about mental health. Two speakers shared their stories regarding mental illness, and students were given the opportunity to ask questions related to mental health issues.

Talking Saves Lives Campaign on AUB and LAU Campuses
On October 9 and 10, 2017, students at both the LAU and AUB campuses, were encouraged to join the conversation and record their messages of support to people who are struggling with mental illness. The Nursing Club at LAU supported Embrace’s campaign ‘Talking saves Lives’, sharing their messages of support.
In the Media

In order to shed light on the various initiatives and milestones that the Embrace team has achieved throughout the year, various media appearances have been secured. The media mentions, as a result of press releases shared and interviews with the Embrace team, covered a multitude of topics, be it from the launching of the Embrace Lifeline, to the fundraising initiatives, the state of mental health in Lebanon and ways to prevent suicide.
جمعية للتوعية من الإنتحار Embrace
Launching of Awareness Website

As an important extension of Embrace LifeLine, Embrace launched a new website dedicated to raising awareness on mental health and suicide prevention. The website www.embracelifeline.org seeks to serve as the go-to platform for various stakeholders. It has: a dedicated section for individuals in times of crisis, with warning signs, ways to cope and further reading; for family members and friends of someone suffering from a mental health issue or suicidal thoughts and ways to help them; and for the general community to get involved to help spread awareness.

For more, visit: www.embracelifeline.org
2. COMMUNITY ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

“Into the Dawn” Walk

‘Into the Dawn’ is an annual suicide memorial walk and an advocacy initiative launched by Embrace intended to provide a community support environment for those who have been affected by suicide. During this walk a memorial wall is created on a yearly basis with photos, keepsakes, and/or names of those we have lost to suicide. During this year’s walk, Embrace launched the Embrace Lifeline campaign ‘Talking Saves Lives’ and attendees shared their stories about their personal struggles with mental illness and suicide and recorded their messages of support through the campaign’s online portal www.embracelifeline.org
Participation in the Marathon

With the support of its sponsor, Murex, runners took part in the Beirut Marathon, which took place on November 12, 2017. Runners signed up to endorse the cause, and wore Embrace t-shirts to raise awareness on the case.
3. EMBRACE LIFELINE SUPPORT TO PERSONS WITH SUICIDE RISK

Embrace continues to support individuals struggling with mental illness and suicide through its recently launched suicide prevention and emotional support helpline:

THE FIRST NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT HELPLINE IN LEBANON: EMBRACE LIFELINE

In response to the growing concern of suicide in Lebanon, coupled with the growing evidence that supports the establishment of a suicide helpline as an effective preventative measure for suicide, Embrace launched the first National Suicide Prevention Helpline in the country in September 2017 in collaboration with the National Mental Health Programme at the MOPH. The lifeline is a component of the national suicide prevention framework under development in line with the national mental health strategy for Lebanon 2015 -2020.

The pilot phase of the helpline ran between September 2017 to January 2018 and in February 2018 the official 4-digit number 1564 was announced. The Embrace Lifeline is currently receiving calls from individuals experiencing suicidal crises and mental and emotional difficulties and their family members. Part of Embrace’s core objectives is to ensure that individuals who require professional support are able to reach it. The Embrace Lifeline also provides referrals to mental health services across the country.

The Lifeline is run by more than 40 trained volunteers. Operating hours are from 12 noon till 2 AM. The Embrace LifeLine hopes to operate on a 24-hour basis in the future.

The Embrace Lifeline seeks to achieve its mission by engaging all stakeholders, working closely with the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (National Mental Health Program) and creating alliances with community leaders, emergency service providers and policymakers.
In Collaboration with

Ministry of Public Health
National Mental Health Programme

embrace

1564
LIFELINE

Don’t let your life end in silence

Call the Lifeline

Available from 12pm to 2am

www.embracelifeline.org
التعاون مع
وزارة الصحة العامة
البرنامج الوطني للصحة النفسية

embrace

1564
خط الحياة

خلّينا ننهي الصمت تنهي الانتحار احكونا ع الخط الحياة

نحنا عالسمع من 12 الظهر - 2 الصبح

www.embracelifeline.org
TESTIMONIAL FROM AN EMBRACE LIFELINE OPERATOR

Batoul Safieddine
Former Helpline Operator

“I have been a volunteer with Embrace since 2015, during which I have participated in the yearly Into the Dawn walks and fundraising events for the helpline. Thus, I did not hesitate to apply for the first Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention training back in February.

I started taking shifts and attending group supervision in September 2017. Despite the tiring long shifts, volunteering as a helpline operator was a rewarding experience. It also complemented my work as a clinical psychology trainee and represented an added value to my clinical skills. I believe that it was a unique experience that I would not have gotten elsewhere.

I would like to thank all my colleagues at the helpline for being supportive and encouraging all throughout. A special thanks goes to Mia and Sanaa for making the call center feel like my second home. I wish you all the best of luck.”
4. CAPACITY BUILDING

As part of resourcing the helpline call center, Embrace conducts ongoing trainings throughout the year offered to individuals in the community who are interested in volunteering as helpline operators. The training “Active Listening and Collaborative Intervention in Suicidal Crises” is an intensive 40-hour training designed to equip the future helpline operators with the necessary skills to manage and de-escalate crisis calls. The training is dedicated to the discussion of suicide in general, local suicide statistics, and to familiarize the helpline operators with how a typical helpline center operates. The trainees learn the call process, the steps that the operators need to follow in order to build a good rapport with the caller, assess the caller’s suicide risk, build hope and collaboratively assist the caller in problem solving.

IN 2017

4 three-day training sessions conducted

40 hour training sessions

40+ individuals trained

45 currently volunteer at the Embrace Lifeline Call Center
A Year-Round Internship Program

Embrace is working on building capacity among young graduates by enriching their learning experience through the specialized internship program, which was launched in 2016. In the last year, six interns have been hosted, who spent a minimum of 3 months each working with Embrace on various projects relevant to their interests and enhancing their experience in the mental health field including fundraising, grant writing, research, and awareness.

TESTIMONIAL FROM AN EMBRACE INTERN

Zahraa Al Sadr

“When choosing an internship site, try to choose one place that shares your vision. I consider myself very lucky to find my vision at Embrace. Joining Embrace, I had the chance to help and support individuals with mental illness, raise awareness, and dispel myths and misconceptions that surround mental illness.”
5. FUNDRAISING

In order to ensure the sustainability of its efforts and the longevity of the Embrace Lifeline, Embrace hosted a fundraising gala dinner on September 12, 2017, at the Phoenicia Hotel. The gala dinner, themed ‘Embracing the Stars’, was attended by over 300 guests who came together to support the cause.
The financials reported here cover revenues and expenses dating from August 2017 (since the official inception of Embrace as a registered NGO) till December 2017.

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We’ve embraced so many achievements with your support

Embrace Partners

Bank Audi

Embrace Lifeline is partly supported by a grant from the Agnes Varis Trust

Embrace Family

Creditbank S.A.L.

PHOENICIA BEIRUT
Embrace Supporters
We couldn’t have done it without:

Friends of Embrace:
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Mrs. Dany Dahdah Baz
Mrs. Wafa Saab
Mrs. Dina Zameli
Mrs. Marwa Khouzami Awwad
Mrs. Jamal El Rassi
Mrs. Rima Hussein
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Mrs. Mona Rasamny
Mrs. Liliane Comair
Mrs. Rola Bizri

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Leo Burnett
Pikasso
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And many others who wish to remain anonymous

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