UPDATES ON EMBRACE LIFELINE
Lebanon’s National Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Helpline

In May 2018, Embrace launched Lebanon’s first Emotional Support and Suicide Prevention Helpline: Embrace Lifeline (1564), in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health.

The Embrace Lifeline is a specialized telephone service that provides services such as suicide risk assessment, collaborative intervention in life threatening suicidal emergencies, and referrals to community resources and treatment programs. The current working hours of the helpline are every day from 12:00 pm till 2:00 am with future plans to become 24/7. At any given time during the hours of operation, the lifeline is served by 2 operators who are qualified to provide a listening ear to individuals from all over Lebanon who are in emotional distress, or struggling with suicidal thoughts.

The launch was rapidly leaked on social media platforms on March 3rd with a campaign that went viral. The helpline number 1564 was shared across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter stories and other digital media with hashtags highlighting Embrace’s slogans and mission such as #1564, #talkingsaveslives, #الحكي بطول العمر. The official national campaign for the launch of the helpline was promoted across Lebanon during the months of May and June 2018.

The campaign included 200 billboards covering all governorates in Lebanon, a TV spot, and a social media campaign. The aim of this campaign is to encourage individual of all age groups and nationalities, experiencing suicidal ideation or distress, to call the LifeLine (1564). The slogan written on the billboards “Don’t Let Your Life End in Silence, Call the Lifeline” also seeks to de-stigmatize suicide in the country, as well as show the support Embrace has for individuals suffering from an emotional crisis or in need of community referrals.
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EMBRACE LIFELINE TRAININGS

As part of its effort in capacity building, and recruitment of human resources, Embrace organized the 5th “Operators’ Training” in June 2018, accommodating individuals seeking volunteering opportunities as operators at the Embrace Lifeline. The 3-day extensive training was conducted in collaboration with the Department of Psychology at AUB. The training was a success, and culminated in the recruitment of approximately 25 new operators to join the crew in serving individuals suffering from emotional distress and/or suicidal ideation. At present, Embrace Lifeline is staffed by 55 dedicated operators, going out of their way every day to help others.

EMBRACE LIFELINE STATISTICS

May - June 2018

During the Months of May - June 2018, the Embrace Lifeline received a total of 59 calls and 174 calls respectively. The mean age of callers was 22 years old in May and 33 years old in June, with the majority falling between the ages of 20-24 years old for both months. In May, Callers during this month were almost equally divided between females and males. In June, callers were more commonly females.

Who did we help?
The helpline receives different types of calls, but mostly during the months of May- June, callers sought out the helpline for emotional distress, suicidal ideations and third party inquiries, such as people concerned about a friend or family member with emotional distress or suicidal ideation.

How much did we help?
In May- June 2018, 100-94% of callers reported having a decreased level of distress from the beginning of the call to the end. Only 1% of callers had a confirmed active suicidal ideation with intents of action state at the end of the call; such figures often exist because calls end abruptly from the caller's end.
WHAT WE’VE BEEN UP TO

AWARENESS SESSIONS

Bechmezzine Awareness Session – January 2018
Throughout 2017, Embrace collaborated with several Lebanese Municipalities (Rashaya, Shouf, Mtein and Ghazir) to host meetings and events, raising awareness on mental health issues and suicide prevention. Individuals from the community are invited to attend these events to learn more about mental illness and suicide, with the opportunity to raise their questions and concerns on the topic to mental health professionals. In January 2018, Embrace’s awareness campaign reached the Municipality of Bechmezzine and incorporated discussions about the treatment of mental illness, as well as the regulation of mental health in Lebanon. Embrace continues its mission to initiate the first nationwide Municipality awareness project to engage as many individuals within the country as possible.

AWARENESS TALKS IN UNIVERSITIES- EMBRACING MENTAL ILLNESS

March/May 2018
During the month of March and May, Embrace held multiple awareness talks in universities such as AUB, LAU, LIU and NDU. These talks accommodate young people struggling with mental illness, who have long been stigmatized in Lebanon. University students and staff are invited to join the talks to embrace these individuals by listening to their stories and gaining insight into their experiences to break the taboo of mental illness. Stories are followed by Q&A, moderated by a mental health professional. In doing so, Embrace has continued its mission to reach out to the population of adolescents and college students in Lebanon, that is most likely to be affected by suicidal ideation, emotional distress and/or mental health issues.
WHAT WE’VE BEEN UP TO

Mental Health Awareness in Schools – May 2018

Embrace has extended its awareness sessions to reach schools and targeting children of young ages who may be vulnerable to mental illness due to a number of risk factors such as bullying, family stressors or academic stressors, to name a few.

In cooperation with Al Manar Modern School, Embrace organised an awareness campaign targeting different contextual issues including road safety, the environment, physical and mental health. Embrace’s bracelets, brochures and informative sheets were given to the students, along with an interactive game to learn more about mental health.

In collaboration with the International College, Dr. Pia Zeinoun, one of Embrace’s board members conducted an awareness session targeting students in Grade 11 and 12 during the school’s annual wellness fair.

In collaboration with the Entrepreneur Academy Lebanon, Ms. Zeina El Jurdi, also a board member at Embrace conducted an awareness session with different age groups, between 4 and 13 years old. With Embrace’s help, the children could discover and learn about the different types of emotions and bullying through videos and role-plays, appropriate to each age group.
WHAT WE’VE BEEN UP TO

EMBRACE AT LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY (LAU) HEALTH FAIR
Embrace participated in the annual LAU Health Fair, at the Beirut Campus, which aims to promote many NGOs in Lebanon highlighting both physical and mental health. Embrace distributed bracelets and brochures to the university students, whilst conducting interactive screening questionnaires about their mental health and quality of life. Embrace continues to be part of universities’ health and NGO fairs to reach out to students and youth populations, raising awareness on mental illness and breaking the stigma. As this young student wrote on the banner, “To be Healthy is to … Accept mental illnesses”.

BLOM BANK SPONSORSHIP AND AWARENESS SESSION – MARCH 2018
In 2018, Embrace received a generous sponsorship from BLOM BANK. Embrace also conducted an awareness session on mental health in the workplace for employees at the bank. The session helped reach a population of working adults that may encounter burdens and workloads in their professional environments. Mental health professionals provided tips and advice on how to avoid the stress and burnout of an overwhelming job. In doing so, Embrace has raised a flag on the importance of mental health in the workplace, inviting employees to take care of themselves and prevent emotional distress.

Embrace at TEDx LAU
Embrace was invited to the TED X LAU event, which exposed Embrace to a wide audience of university students and staff. Our lovely interns Ms. Serene Yordi and Ms. Maria Tinawi answered countless questions that were asked regarding mental illness, suicide, mental health issues in Lebanon as well as volunteering opportunities at Embrace and the services we offer. We also received a lot of support and encouragement to continue Embrace’s mission. The interns used interactive techniques to teach the students how to name mental disorders, how to phrase support messages to help someone struggling with a specific mental illness, how to show empathy and how to listen to someone. These topics reflect the lessons taught to volunteers in training to become operators at the Embrace Lifeline.
WHAT WE’VE BEEN UP TO

EMBRACE AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY – APRIL 2018
The Arab Public Health Organization at Johns Hopkins University (JHU), in collaboration with Embrace, organized a seminar on the Embrace LifeLine: How the First National Suicide Helpline in the Middle East came to Life! Dr. Ziad Nahas, President of Embrace discussed the journey that lead to the development of the first helpline in Lebanon. Ms. Mia Atoui, Co-founder and Helpline Supervisor of the Embrace Lifeline joined via Skype to share the experience of running the helpline and challenges faced at the national level in running such an operation. This event has allowed Embrace to spread its mission beyond the country, and share its success in prestigious universities. The event was organized by Ms. Farah Yehia, graduate student in the doctoral program of Health Policy and Management at Johns Hopkins. She is also a member of the Arab Public Health Organization and JHU and a co-founder at Embrace.

SUICIDE SYMPOSIUM BY IDRAAC- FEBRUARY 2018
MINOs sister organization, IDRAAC organized a symposium: “Suicide in Lebanon: Where Are We?” in association with the Department of Psychiatry and Clinic Psychology at the St Georges Hospital University Medical Center and the Faculty of Medicine at Balamand University on Saturday February 17, 2018 at the Batlouni auditorium- Balamand University. The aim of this symposium was to draw on the expertise of specialists in the field from the mental health, governmental, religious, academic and civil society perspectives as a stepping stone for future solutions. Ms. Mia Atoui, Co-founder of Embrace, talked about the Embrace Lifeline and its influence on mental health, in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Public Health, WHO, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice and Forensic Medicine.
EMBRACE’S LIFELINE AT THE BEFRIENDERS WORLDWIDE CONFERENCE

Embrace LifeLine has been granted membership in Befrienders Worldwide, a network of over 160 emotional support centres in over 29 countries. This represents a major milestone in the establishment and visibility of the helpline on a regional and global scale. Embrace Co-founder and helpline supervisor at Embrace, Ms. Mia Atoui, participated in the regional conference held by Befrienders Worldwide in June 2018 in Lithuania entitled “Responding to the needs of people affected by suicide”. The conference presented an opportunity to discuss suicide prevention efforts and the work of helplines from all over the world. Ms. Atoui discussed this aspect from the Embrace Lifeline’s operations and perspective. Shared experiences from helplines which have been well established for years across different countries helped to further guide the work being done in Lebanon, and continue to strategize further efforts for Lebanon’s helpline in future.
WHAT WE’VE BEEN UP TO

CHARITY RUNWAY SHOW AT SURSOCK MUSEUM - JUNE 2018
Embrace organized its first fundraising event of the year on June 19, 2018 at Sursock Museum as the first Charity Runway Show in the country, promoting mental health and raising awareness on suicide through a fashion show. This event was successful in contributing to our mission by raising awareness on mental health in Lebanon, de-stigmatizing suicide and helping us promote the first national Emotional Crisis and Suicide Prevention helpline: the Embrace Lifeline (1564) to a wide audience. We spread a beautiful message highlighting to our society that fashion and mental health can work together to empower people and make them feel beautiful no matter what.

The Embrace Charity Runway Show was sponsored by Creditbank and Bank Audi.

TAKING A LEAD IN PATIENT ADVOCACY

“SAHLAB” BY ZIAD KAJ- BOOK SIGNING IN COLLABORATION WITH EMBRACE
Ziad Kaj, author of the book “Sahlab”, collaborated with Embrace to launch his Arabic book in which he outlines his journey and personal struggles with bipolar disorder. Embrace is proud to have collaborated with Ziad Kaj as an initiative that is part of Embrace’s commitment to support individuals to share their stories and break the silence around mental health issues.
EMBRACE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MEET OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Lea Zeinoun, MPH
I met Embrace while completing a project as part of my master’s degree in Public Health at AUB. From the minute I met the Embrace team, I knew I would never meet a more passionate, hard working group of people so devoted to a single cause. I couldn’t get enough, I started out as a volunteer soon enough I became an intern and now I am honoured to not only have this position within Embrace but so see the rapid growth it has had. I have had extensive experience in training, teaching, writing and planning and developing interventions, and I am ready to put all of that into the areas needed in my role as Executive Director to only push Embrace further forward. For a cause so dear to my heart, I work hard and its inspiring to have a team around me committed to doing the same.

MEET OUR INTERNS
Alya Gaspard, BA
Since I heard about Embrace and its mission, I directly sought to be part of this amazing NGO and its team. Embrace has offered Lebanon and its citizens a service that is much needed in a country where suicide and mental illness are still taboo. I have always been interested in the field of psychology and being an intern at Embrace has helped me in achieving my first steps in supporting others, showing empathy to people struggling with emotional distress and most importantly, raising awareness on mental health. Being both an operator and a project coordinator intern at Embrace keeps on pushing me towards my ambition more and more.

Serene Yordi, BA, MA candidate
Why am I working for Embrace, you may ask? Well, the answer is two-fold. To me, nothing is more important than saving a life - and this is what we do here at Embrace. The phone rings, and we are transferred to a realm where nothing else matters but the wellbeing of the caller. Also, I love Research - answering the unanswered, diving into an untouched question. Embrace provides me with both, the satisfaction of helping my brothers and sisters, and the opportunity to work on research in an understudied domain in an understudied country.
Here at Embrace, my position is a 3 in 1 - ranging from Chief Operator, Research Coordinator, to Helpline Operator. I can wrap this all up by saying that I am also currently doing my M.A in Clinical Psychology at Haigazian University!
UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROJECTS

INTO THE DAWN WALK
SEPTEMBER 9, 2018

*Event is free and open to the public

CAPHARNAŬM BY NADINE LABAKI
AVANT-PREMIERE
SEPTEMBER 15, 2018

For ticket reservation please contact us at 70 - 495 489 or 01 - 341 941

#EMBRACELIFE AT IRIS
SEPTEMBER 24, 2018

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