

The Anatomy of Suicide Ideation Among Native American Youth

BY DOREEN BIRD, PHD, MPH

CHUNTE WASHAKE SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

FEBRUARY 2025



Agenda

- ▶ **Head** - Mental health and our thoughts
- ▶ **Heart** - Trauma and resilience, what we go through
- ▶ **Stomach** – Nutrition, gut
- ▶ **Feet** – Movement, action, what we can do
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Gratitude Activity



Head

- ▶ Mental health – treatment, traditional Healing
- ▶ Substance abuse – exposure, self medicating
- ▶ Depression – diagnosed or general sadness
- ▶ Anxiety – diagnosed, popular terminology

Self talk +/-

Rumination – awareness, coping

Self love
Gratitude
?

Prayer/
Spirituality



Heart

- ▶ Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- ▶ Family/ Home /Relations
- ▶ Love - Family/ Self Love
- ▶ Resilience – Strong Heart, Warrior, Survivor, We Are Still Here!



[Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) | NNLM

Stomach

- ▶ Nutrition – Food is medicine, vitamin/mineral deficiencies can have an impact on mental health.
- ▶ “...nutritional factors are intertwined with human cognition, behavior and emotions.” [Understanding nutrition, depression and mental illnesses – PMC](#)
- ▶ “...optimal brain function relies on adequate amounts of cholesterol and essential omega-3 fatty acids” [Nutritional Risk Factors for Suicide | Psychology Today](#)
- ▶ Traditional foods
- ▶ Gut instincts- intuition, ancestral guidance



[Psychiatry.org](https://www.psychiatry.org) - [How to Boost Mental Health Through Better Nutrition](#)

Feet

- ▶ Foundation – What kind of ground is the youth standing on? Family, community
- ▶ Cultural participation has been shown to be protective
- ▶ Physical activity – movement of any kind is key
- ▶ What can we do? Reach out, make a change, participate
- ▶ Find one thing to be grateful for
- ▶ Ask for Ancestral guidance to walk in beauty, show me the way



Bandelier National Monument

Self Care

- ▶ Sleep
- ▶ Physical activity - Movement
- ▶ Nutrition
- ▶ Self love
- ▶ Nature
- ▶ Water
- ▶ Music – (frequencies)



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

Protective Factors

- ▶ Family & Community Support – “Having 1 person show they care...”
- ▶ Cultural Identity- Participating in Ceremony. Language, family, community.
- ▶ Coping Skills- Self soothing, breathe, redirect, gratitude, Nature
- ▶ Connectedness – School, culture, friends, community, self, Nature
- ▶ Knowing where to get help- school, culture, friends, community, 988



Resources


- ▶ WeRNative – www.wernative.org
- ▶ Healthy Native Youth – www.healthynativeyouth.org
- ▶ Suicide Prevention Resource Center – sprc.org
- ▶ 988 – Call or text 988 for crisis lifeline - [988 Lifeline](https://www.988lifeline.org/) - If you need emotional support, reach out to the national mental health hotline: 988.



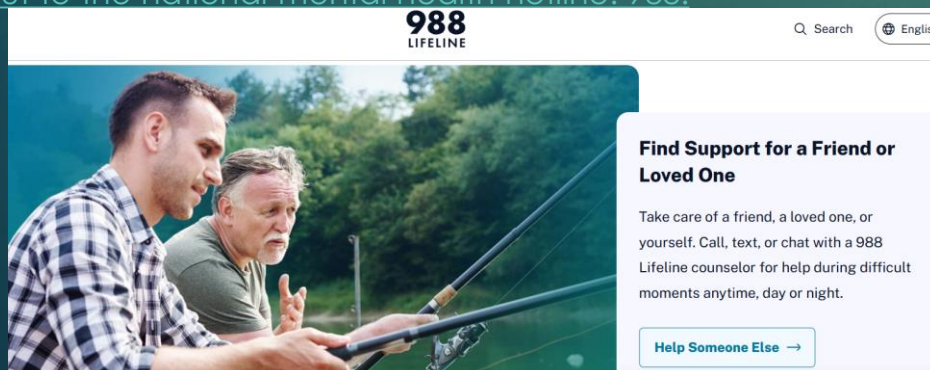
CRISIS TEXT LINE |

It's okay to talk about what you're going through.

Crisis Text Line is here to listen.



Text NATIVE to 741741 or message Crisis Text Line on Facebook





“This is good, noble work that we’re doing. It’s easy to get discouraged... And I get there about once a week. But this is good work, and we need to tell our people that are working in the field...that their work matters.”

(Key Informant)

Gratitude Activity

1. Get a glass of water
2. Hold the water in your hands and thank the water for its life giving qualities
3. Drink the water and feel grateful for its life giving blessings

1. Do this daily and change the intentions i.e. say “Love” or “purity” or “strength” or “healthy” or “thank you” to the water
2. And drink love, purity, strength, health and gratitude into your being



Thank You <3



Doreen Bird with the Women of Bears Ears at Totem Pole Gathering at Sand Island, Utah.

Contact Info:
birddydee@gmail.com