



SOUTH DAKOTA: Preventing suicide with a “contagion of strength”

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[NPR](#) [1]

For seven years, South Dakota’s Rapid City Central High School has been using a suicide prevention program called Sources of Strength, and school leaders are happy with the results they are seeing. A three-year study of schools in three states found that the program significantly increases help-seeking by students, especially those who are or have been suicidal. Students trained as “peer leaders” trained by the program show success in encouraging friends to seek help from adults. Sources of Strength focuses on helping students build up their own protective factors like positive relationships, mental and physical health, spirituality, and family support. The program also involves adults in a support role for the peer leaders. “The biggest prevention piece that’s out there is connection,” said Tim McGowan, the school counselor who brought Sources of Strength to Central High. “When kids feel connected to somebody or their environment they’re going to make fewer risky decisions.”

Spark Extra! Learn more about [Sources of Strength](#) [2].

Populations: Adolescents
Strategies: Increase Help-Seeking, Connectedness

Links within this resource

[1] <http://www.npr.org/blogs/ed/2015/02/25/385418961/preventing-suicide-with-a-contagion-of-strength>

[2] <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/sources-strength>

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