



Behavioral Health Services  
*People care by caring people*

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March 11, 2010

David Covington, LPC, MBA  
Chief of Adult Services  
Magellan of Arizona  
4129 E. Van Buren, suite 150  
Phoenix, AZ 85008

Dear Mr. Covington,

I would like to thank you for your initiative to make the ASIST training available to the behavioral health community here in Maricopa County. I feel very fortunate for the opportunity to be trained in the skills and knowledge needed to provide first aid to persons at risk of suicide. I am the executive assistant to Dale Rinard, the President/CEO of TERROS. I took the training in January at TERROS and had no idea I would be using the skills, if ever, so quickly after the training. I would like to share with you an experience I had in which I was able to exercise my ASIST knowledge with someone who was dealing with a person thinking of suicide.

Shortly after taking the ASIST training, I received a call from a very close friend of mine and knew immediately there was something wrong. Between the tears and anger, she explained that her boyfriend of four years had just told her he was thinking of suicide. His exact words were, "I want you to know that I'm in the first stage of suicide." She explained that during the conversation she first tried to dismiss his comment by telling him to stop being ridiculous, get a good night's sleep and assured him that he would feel better in the morning. When that didn't work, she tried to talk him out of it by telling him all of the things in life worth living for, but he just became angry with her. The conversation ended with her telling him he didn't love her and him hanging up on her. I could sense helplessness, confusion and anger in her voice. "How could he be doing this to me," she kept saying. Being a woman, I knew where her heart and emotions were. As I was listening I was struck with disbelief, sadness and confusion. I've known this man for four years and would have never thought of him as suicidal. I realized that I was experiencing many of her emotions; however, I didn't feel completely helpless. The knowledge I acquired from the ASIST training gave me a source of confidence, and I shared that I had recently taken a training on suicide intervention. I felt that this was a hopeful moment for her as she let out a laugh of relief and said, "are you kidding me, are there really trainings for this stuff?" I got out my ASIST Suicide First Aid guide. We spent the next few hours going over the ASIST model of Connecting, Understanding and Assisting.

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I spoke to her about six weeks later. My girlfriend used the ASIST model the next time she spoke to her boyfriend. She told me that speaking to someone you love openly about their thoughts of suicide was the hardest thing she's ever had to do. She expressed that she wanted to tell him, "no, don't do this," instead of, "do you have a plan, and a date?" After several weeks of open dialog between them, her boyfriend stated that being able to openly talk about it, to be able to discuss in detail his thoughts and reasons made him realize this might not be something he wanted to do. I was excited to hear that he was crossing over to the life side. I'm very proud of them; they are continuing to use the ASIST model and seeking professional help.

I am truly grateful for the skills and knowledge I've learned from this training. Having no clinical background to reference, and taking into account my past convictions on suicide, I probably would have had unsympathetic recommendations for her. It was rewarding to know exactly what to say at the right time.

Sincerely,



Tiffany Tipton  
Executive Assistant to:  
Dale Rinard, President/CEO