

NEWSLETTER

WELCOME TO THE

◆ The Guidance of Hope Corner

When Survival Becomes Too Heavy

Hey Fam,

This September newsletter is a little heavy, but it is necessary.

September is Suicide Prevention Month, and as I sat down to write this letter, my heart was with Pierre Damas Bel, a 20-year-old Haitian young man in Springfield, Ohio. Pierre was a recent high school graduate, student-athlete, and young man with dreams for his future. His family has shared that after being required to wear an ICE ankle monitor, he experienced intense shame, humiliation, and despair before his death.

I want to dedicate this issue to Pierre, his family, and my Haitian community, which continues to experience fear, uncertainty, stigma, and the emotional consequences of what is happening around immigration in this country.

As a Haitian-American woman, therapist, and immigrant who came to this country as a child, **this hits differently.**

Haitians are not America's enemy.

We did not colonize ourselves. We did not choose the historical exploitation that followed Haiti's fight for freedom. And Haitian people should not continuously have to prove that we are worthy of dignity, safety, opportunity, and humanity.



I also want to acknowledge immigrants from other communities who are living with fear, uncertainty, family separation, discrimination, or the feeling that they are no longer welcome in a place they once believed could offer opportunity.

When I came to this country, I was given opportunities that helped shape the woman and professional I am today. Today, I find myself wrestling with what this country represents for people arriving with those same hopes.

And this is why **mental health cannot be separated from what is happening around us.**

Fear affects mental health.

Humiliation affects mental health.

Discrimination affects mental health.

Isolation affects mental health.

Feeling like you don't belong affects mental health.

Rest because you're worthy of it.

2026

September is Suicide Prevention Month

Editors Letter Continue...

The CDC reminds us that suicide is rarely the result of one event or circumstance. Individual experiences interact with relationships, communities, access to care, discrimination, isolation, hopelessness, and other factors. Connection to family, culture, community, and quality healthcare can be protective.

In 2024, **48,824 people died by suicide in the United States**, while an estimated **14.3 million adults seriously considered suicide. (CDC)**

But statistics are people.

They are somebody's child. Somebody's sibling. Somebody's friend. Somebody's client.

Somebody's Pierre.

So this month, I am asking us to pay closer attention. Check on the person who suddenly became quiet. Ask the "strong friend" how they're really doing. Make room for conversations about shame, hopelessness, fear, loneliness, and feeling like a burden.

And when someone tells you they're struggling, don't rush to fix them. **Listen. Stay connected. Help them find support.**

To my fellow clinicians, and to every family who has lost someone to suicide, I also want to say this with care:

Their pain does not erase the love, care, support, or effort you gave them.

Suicide-loss grief can leave behind questions that may never receive complete answers. Give yourself permission to grieve without turning every unanswered question into blame.

And if **you** are the person struggling right now:

Please stay.

Tell somebody. Reach out. Let someone sit with you in the pain. You deserve the opportunity to discover what life can look and feel like beyond this moment.

This September, may we move beyond simply "raising awareness" and begin creating families, workplaces, schools, therapy rooms, churches, and communities where people feel safe enough to say:

"I'm not okay, and I need help."

Pierre, may your story remind us that **dignity matters. Belonging matters. Mental health matters.**

May you rest in peace.

With love, solidarity & hope,

Judeline 🧡

SOMETIMES "I'M FINE" ISN'T FINE



Suicidal distress doesn't always look the way we expect it to.

Someone can go to work. Attend school. Laugh. Post pictures. Take care of their children. Show up for everybody else and still be struggling internally.

Warning signs can include talking about hopelessness, feeling trapped or like a burden, withdrawing from others, increased substance use, significant changes in sleep, agitation, reckless behavior, extreme mood changes, or talking about wanting to die. A noticeable new or worsening change, especially following a painful event, loss, or major transition, deserves attention.

♥ Don't Be Afraid to Ask

If you're worried about someone, you can ask directly:

"Are you thinking about suicide?"

Then listen without judgment.

You don't need the perfect words. You don't need to become their therapist.

You need to be willing to **ask, be there, help keep them safe, connect them to support**, and follow up. Those are the five action steps recommended by the **988 Lifeline**.

Do's & Don'ts

To help someone who is struggling with thoughts of suicide.

Do's

- ☒ Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- ☒ Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- ☒ Be non-judgmental.

Don'ts

- ☒ Don't dare them to do it.
- ☒ Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- ☒ Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.

“

GOH Reminder:

Asking someone directly about suicide doesn't mean you have failed them. Sometimes it means you're finally creating enough safety for them to tell the truth.”



BELONGING IS MENTAL HEALTH

Sometimes the Intervention Is Connection

We talk a lot about coping skills in therapy. Deep breathing. Mindfulness. Boundaries. Journaling. Medication. Exercise.

All of those tools can matter. But sometimes what a person desperately needs is to know:

**I belong somewhere.
Someone would notice if I disappeared.
My life matters to somebody.**

The CDC recognizes connection to partners, family, friends, schools, cultural communities, and other social institutions as protective factors associated with lower suicide risk. A strong sense of cultural identity can also be protective.

So this month, don't underestimate the mental-health value of the phone call, the invitation, the meal, the church community, the friend who checks twice, the therapist who follows up, or simply sitting beside someone who doesn't have the words yet.



FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND

When Someone You Love Dies by Suicide

Suicide grief can be complicated. Alongside sadness may come anger, confusion, guilt, relief, shame, unanswered questions, or endless replaying of the past:

"What did I miss?"

"Why didn't they tell me?"

"Could I have stopped it?"

"Why wasn't my love enough?"

People who lose someone to suicide may experience prolonged grief, shock, anger, guilt, depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts themselves.

Your grief deserves care, too.

You are allowed to miss them and be angry.

You are allowed to love them and not understand their decision.

And you are allowed to stop punishing yourself for not knowing everything they were carrying.



belonging

[noun]

to be seen, understood, and valued
without needing to change yourself.

nonprofit
LEADERSHIP LAB
Reclaim the Narrative. Lead the Change.



CULTURE & COMMUNITY

To My Zoes: Nou la nap kenbe"

To my Haitian community:

Nou la. Nou enpòtan.

We are here. We matter.

Our history is filled with resistance, sacrifice, migration, rebuilding, faith, family, and survival. But sometimes our greatest strength can also become the thing that keeps us silent.

"Mwen anfòm." I'm fine.

"Bondye ap regle sa." God will handle it.

"Fòk ou fò." You have to be strong.

Faith can sustain us. Culture can ground us. Resilience can carry us. And we can still need help. **Strength and vulnerability are not enemies.**

You can pray and go to therapy.

You can love your culture and challenge the stigma around mental health.

You can be grateful for your opportunities and acknowledge that you're struggling.

You can be the strong one and still say:

"Mwen bezwen èd." – I need help.

Our community deserves more than survival.

We deserve to heal, too.



IMMIGRANT MENTAL HEALTH

What Happens When "Home" Doesn't Feel Safe?

Immigration isn't only a legal or political experience. It can also be an emotional experience.

Fear about status. Language barriers. Separation from family. Financial pressure. Starting over. Discrimination. Cultural adjustment. Survivor's guilt. Pressure to succeed because of everything your family sacrificed.

And sometimes the painful question:

"Do I belong here?"

Discrimination, social isolation, lack of healthcare access, financial/legal problems, and hopelessness are among the factors that can contribute to suicide risk, while cultural identity, connection, support, and healthcare access can offer protection.

So when we talk about immigration, we must also be willing to talk about the human beings living inside those policies and experiences. Behind every status, application, case number, or headline is a person with a nervous system, a family, a history, and a future they are trying to build.

Reflection

Where do I feel like I belong? Who allows me to exist without constantly proving my worth? How can I create that sense of belonging for someone else?

Fall Is Coming... So Let's Talk Relationships

As the weather cools down, people start talking about “cuffing season,” that time of year when being boo’d up suddenly sounds a little more appealing. But before you grab somebody just because the temperature dropped, let’s talk about intentional connection, whether you’re single, coupled, or practicing ethical non-monogamy.

Singles: Cuffing Season Is Not an Emergency

Fall can make companionship look real good. Cozy nights, holidays, matching pajamas, somebody to text “wyd?” when it gets dark at 5 PM. 😊 But loneliness can sometimes convince us that **any connection is better than no connection.**

Before you “cuff,” ask yourself:
Do I actually like this person, or do I like having somebody?

Pay attention to whether you're compromising boundaries, ignoring red flags, rushing intimacy, or accepting inconsistency because you don't want to spend the season alone.

GOH Reminder: Don't let seasonal loneliness make a permanent decision for you.

Date. Flirt. Have fun. Be open to love. But remember: **being chosen isn't the goal. Choosing well is.**



GOH Couples Challenge

- During your next disagreement, neither partner can offer a rebuttal until they can accurately explain the other person's perspective.
- **Understanding your partner doesn't mean you're admitting they're right. It means you're making sure they feel heard before asking them to hear you.**



Couples: Listen to Understand, Not Just to Respond

Sometimes couples aren't actually having a conversation—they're having two arguments at the same time. While one person is talking, the other is preparing their defense.

Try these 5 ways to listen differently during conflict:

1. Pause your defense. Before explaining yourself, make sure you understand what your partner is actually saying.
2. Reflect before responding. Try: “What I hear you saying is...” and allow them to correct you.
3. Listen for the feeling underneath the words. Anger may be covering hurt, fear, disappointment, rejection, or feeling unimportant.
4. Ask before assuming. Instead of “So you're saying I never do anything right?” ask, “What did this situation mean to you?”
5. Validate before problem-solving. You don't have to agree with someone's interpretation to acknowledge their experience: “I can understand why that hurt you.”

WHAT'S NEW ”



GUIDANCE OF HOPE
WHERE THE ROAD TO HEALING NEVER ENDS

HEAL
LEARN
UNLEARN
RECLAIM

WHY WASN'T I ENOUGH?

A TWO-DAY JOURNEY FROM
HEARTBREAK TO SELF-RECLAMATION

6 HOURS • 2 DAYS • 1 HEALING JOURNEY

DAY 1
Why Do I Love Like This?
UNDERSTANDING ATTACHMENT,
HEARTBREAK & THE LOVE WE
WERE TAUGHT

DAY 2
**I Was So Busy Being Chosen,
I Forgot to Choose**
RECLAIMING YOUR IDENTITY,
WORTH, VALUES & BOUNDARIES

OCTOBER 3 & 4, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

REGISTRATION

Early Bird **\$99**
PER PERSON

Regular **\$125**
PER PERSON

UNDERSTAND
THE PATTERN.
RELEASE THE STORY.
CHOOSE YOURSELF.

WHY WASN'T I ENOUGH?

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DAY 1

WHY DO I LOVE LIKE THIS?
UNDERSTANDING ATTACHMENT,
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TAUGHT

DAY 2

I WAS SO BUSY BEING CHOSEN, I
FORGOT TO CHOOSE

RECLAIMING YOUR IDENTITY,
WORTH, VALUES & BOUNDARIES

BUILDING BONDS

BREAKING THE CYCLE
BUILDING THE BOND
UNDERSTAND. REPAIR. RECONNECT.

OCTOBER 17-18, 2026 | 10:00 AM –
1:00 PM

DAY 1 – UNDERSTANDING US
ATTACHMENT • COMMUNICATION •
EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

DAY 2 – REPAIRING US
CONFLICT • TRUST • RECONNECTION



GUIDANCE OF HOPE
WHERE THE ROAD TO HEALING NEVER ENDS

HEAL
LEARN
UNLEARN
RECLAIM

BUILDING BONDS

UNDERSTAND. REPAIR. RECONNECT.

A TWO-DAY
COUPLES WORKSHOP

OCTOBER 17-18, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

DAY 1
Understanding Us
Attachment • Communication
Emotional Awareness

DAY 2
Repairing Us
Conflict • Trust • Reconnection

REGISTRATION

Early Bird **\$175**
PER COUPLE

Regular **\$225**
PER COUPLE

TWO DAYS. SIX HOURS. A STRONGER US.

Guidance of Hope Resource Corner

GOH TOOLBOX STOP SKILL (DBT)

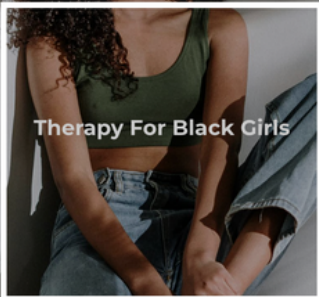
- 01 **Stop**
- 02 **Take a breath**
- 03 **Observe**
- 04 **Proceed mindfully**

PERFECT FOR: EMOTIONAL
OVERWHELM, FAMILY CONFLICT,
WORK STRESS, CAREGIVING



BIPOC-Centered Mental Health Resources

Inclusive Therapy directories

A photograph of a Black woman with curly hair, wearing a green tank top and blue jeans, sitting on a bed. The text "Therapy For Black Girls" is overlaid in white.

Therapy For Black Girls

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a couch, talking. The man is wearing a grey jacket and the woman is wearing a blue shirt. The text "Therapy for Lanin X" is overlaid in white.

Therapy for Lanin X

A photograph of a Black man in a blue sweater holding a green book. The text "Melanin & Mental Health" is overlaid in white.

Melanin & Mental Health

A close-up photograph of a person's face, focusing on their eyes and nose. They are wearing a colorful, patterned headband. The text "National Queer and Trans Therapist of color" is overlaid in white.

National Queer and Trans
Therapist of color

A photograph of two men in military uniforms sitting on a bench. The text "Sol Counseling & Consulting" is overlaid in white.

Sol Counseling &
Consulting

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Community-based healing spaces

BEAM

Supports the mental health and well-being of marginalized communities through training, funding, and healing-centered resources for therapists and wellness practitioners.

LOVELAND FOUNDATION

Supports Black women's mental health by funding therapy, providing resources, and investing in BIPOC therapists

THE NAP MINISTRY

Was founded in 2016 by Tricia Hersey and is an organization that examines the liberating power of naps.

”

Culturally responsive podcasts and readings

Couch Chronicles
Therapist After Dark
(My podcast)

Therapy For Black
Girls

TIA: His Truth, Her
Truth

 **KEEP THIS NUMBER**
988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

Rest of Us Podcast

All Relations Podcast

CLINICIAN CORNER

”

When the Therapist Is Grieving Too

Therapists are trained to hold space for grief, trauma, crisis, and suicidal thoughts. But **clinicians are human too**.

Losing a client to suicide can bring grief, self-doubt, fear, guilt, anger, hypervigilance, and an urge to replay every assessment, session, intervention, and clinical decision.

Clinical responsibility matters.
And so does clinician humanity.

Consult. Seek supervision. Review the case clinically without turning reflection into self-punishment. Allow yourself to grieve. Get your own support when you need it. **Being a therapist does not make you immune to loss. And experiencing grief does not make you less competent.**

Interested in therapy, workshops, or future newsletters? Visit the Guidance of Hope website or follow us on social media for updates.

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Therapist After Dark
(My podcast)

Therapy For
Black Girls

TIA: His Truth, Her
Truth
(My New Podcast)

Rest of Us Podcast

All Relations Podcast

”

FROM GUIDANCE OF HOPE

Please Stay.

This month's newsletter may have felt heavier than most.

That's intentional. Because sometimes healing isn't about finding the perfect affirmation.

Sometimes healing begins with telling the truth about what hurts. And **sometimes the most powerful thing we can offer another human being is not advice. It's presence.**

I see you.

I hear you.

You matter.

You belong here.

Please stay.

And as we continue down this road together, remember: The Road to Healing Never Ends.

WITH CARE,

**JUDELIN ALTEMA-COMMEY, LCPC
FOUNDER, GUIDANCE OF HOPE, LLC**

Interested in therapy, workshops, or future newsletters? Visit the Guidance of Hope website or follow us on social media for updates.