



Western Mass  
Recovery Learning Community

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July 17, 2017

Dear Potential Applicant:

We are writing you about the next opportunity to attend an “Alternatives to Suicide” facilitator training November 8 to November 10, 2017, facilitated by Caroline White and Sean Donovan. We’ve had great responses to the trainings we’ve offered so far. Here are a few comments from previous participants:

- *“I want to thank [the trainers] and all my fellow Trainees for opening my soul. I have done many different trainings. The completion of [this training] is the one I am the most proud of, and the most inspired by.”*
- *“It was so very good it inspired me to be involved with this process - a truly important and needed training. It should be mandatory.”*
- *“This is one of the best trainings I attended in a while because it challenged me to really look at my fear and how I connect with myself and others.”*
- *“You have opened my mind to new possibilities, taught me much, and I am extremely grateful, and proud, to have been a part of this wonderful shared experience, which I found more than a little transformative as well.”*

The Alternatives to Suicide approach was developed by the Western Massachusetts Recovery Learning Community (RLC) in 2009 as one of the only peer-to-peer groups that truly focuses on the topic of suicide. Rather than assessment and risk, these groups are based in creating a non-judgmental space in which to discuss suicide and other taboo topics.

*“Before [these groups], there was a big part of myself that I couldn’t show anybody. I was told I could only talk about my sadness in this sanctioned little box (my therapist’s office). But I couldn’t even talk about suicide there, because they would make me go into the hospital.” - Group Participant*

Currently, there are only a handful of Alternatives to Suicide groups in the country. However, with interest growing in the training and philosophy that makes up the foundation of this approach, we anticipate that more groups will soon begin popping up in Massachusetts and beyond. Join us and be a part of the movement.

Sincerely,

The Western Mass RLC

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We believe that the journey leads to healing and hope

*Under the umbrella of The Western Mass Training Consortium*



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**Training Details:**

**ACCEPTANCE TO THE TRAINING:** We will accept applications until Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>. At that time, we will review all applications received and notify people who have been accepted to the training by Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to request early acceptance to the training (because you are coming from far away or have other extenuating circumstances that would require early notification of acceptance), please note that on your application. **Please Note:** We ALWAYS notify people whether or not they have been accepted. If you do not hear back, it may be that we did not receive your application, so please check in with us.

**TRAINING DATES, TIMES AND LOCATION:** Dates for the training are scheduled for Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, through Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup>. Each day will run from 9:30am to 4:30pm. Reading homework may be assigned ahead of time and/or during the class. The training will be located at the South Hadley Public Library at 2 Canal Street in South Hadley, Massachusetts. **Attendance at all 3 sessions is required to complete the training.**

**TRAINING PREREQUISITES:** This training is primarily intended for people who have some basic facilitation skills and/or training, though not absolutely required so long as it is understood that the training is not designed to provide these basic skills. You should have an active interest in facilitating an Alternatives to Suicide group!

**COST:** There is no cost for this training for people residing or working in Massachusetts. For out-of-state attendees, we are requesting a \$100.00 fee per participant. **(This fee is to support our own limited budget and resources, and is negotiable if you are coming as an individual not sponsored by an organization or if it is somehow otherwise cost prohibitive. We do not want this fee to be what stops someone from being able to participate.)** Participants are responsible for their own food and travel expenses as applicable.

**OTHER IMPORTANT INFO:** This training is open to people who identify as suicide attempt survivors, people who have struggled with suicidal thoughts, allies, friends and family, clinicians, peer workers and more. **However: Only people who have been through personal struggles with thoughts of suicide or attempts are able to actually facilitate Alternatives to Suicide groups, and those groups should be held in non-clinical environments.** Others who attend will be supported to use the approach more generally in their work and/or to offer an alternate group format that is better suited to a wider variety of environments. If you attend, you should expect that the group will include a mixture of people in varied roles. This training is designed to challenge and encourage creative thought about different belief systems, and so openness and genuine curiosity is a must! It is not intended as a 'train the trainer' model.

***Applications are due Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017***

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## Application for Alternatives to Suicide Facilitator Training

**Due Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

There has already been a high degree of interest in the training and spaces are limited. As a result, we are asking people to apply to do the training and we have set areas of priority which we will use when selecting participants. We will prioritize applicants who:

- Are willing and able to attend all three sessions
- Have some prior facilitation training and/or experience
- Are suicide attempt survivors and/or have struggled with suicidal thoughts
- Are invested in starting Alternatives to Suicide groups (or facilitating existing groups)
- If not able to start an Alternatives to Suicide group, are able to clearly articulate how they will use what they learn (to inform general approaches at work, to start an alternate group in a clinical setting)

### **Contact Information (PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY)**

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip Code:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Agency or organization where you work (if applicable):

Type of organization: **Peer Support    Hospital    Day Program    Residential    Other**

Are you requesting early notification of acceptance? (I.E. Do you need to know if you've been accepted to the training BEFORE October 13<sup>th</sup> when all others will be notified?)

**YES**

**NO**

**If Yes, please briefly explain why early notification is needed (e.g., for travel plans, etc.):**

### **Application (Please feel free to attach separate sheets if necessary)**

1. Please indicate which of the following applies to you: (circle as many as apply)

- a. I am a suicide attempt survivor and/or have struggled substantially with suicidal thoughts
- b. I work in a peer role in a mental health setting and would like to start a group there
- c. I work in a traditional role in a mental health setting and would like to start a group there
- d. Other, please specify:

**(If you have selected 'b' or 'c,' please enclose a letter of support from your supervisor or other administrator that confirms their interest in setting up a group at your organization and details the nature of that support.)**

2. I am able to attend all three training sessions to be held on **Wednesday THROUGH Friday from 9:30am to 4:30pm** on the following dates: November 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>?

Yes                      No      (Circle one. If no, I will not be able to attend \_\_\_\_\_)

3. Please initial that you have read and understand each statement:

*Initials*

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I need to complete all three days to successfully complete the training.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that this is intended to train \*facilitators\* for Alternatives to Suicide groups (or alternate format) and **does not** prepare participants to train facilitators themselves. (I.E., This is not intended as a 'train the trainer' workshop.)

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that this training does not guarantee me a job as a facilitator, and that it will be up to me and/or my own organization or group to find financial and/or any other support needed to actually start a group.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the training group will likely include a mixture of people who have experience with suicidal thoughts, allies, people working in peer roles and people in clinical roles.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that this training is not intended to provide basic facilitation skills, but rather focuses on facilitation skills and perspectives directly pertaining to the Alternatives to Suicide approach.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that Alternatives to Suicide groups must be facilitated by people who themselves have considered or attempted suicide, and should be held in non-clinical settings. An alternate format (that incorporates many of the principles of the Alternatives to Suicide approach) will be offered during the training to people who plan to hold groups in clinical settings.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that if I write illegibly or if my answers are only a couple of words or a sentence long, my application will probably be discarded. (Nor do we need essays, but we need at least a few sentences in order to get a sense of where you're coming from!)

4. If you are someone who plans on starting a group, do you see yourself having the support to start an 'Alternatives to Suicide' group (in non-clinical spaces like libraries, churches, peer-to-peer spaces, etc.) or will you be seeking to set up an alternate format in a clinical setting? (*If you don't plan on starting a group, skip to #5*)

5. If you are someone who does not plan on starting a group, how do you see yourself using what you learning at this training? (*If you plan on starting a group, skip to #6*)

