



Sharpen Suicide Prevention and Postvention (SSPP) — Best Practices on the School and Community Level – a 4-hour evidence-based course

This course is a recommended companion with Sharpen Mental Health Literacy (SMHL), Overcoming Adversity and 5 Minute Mindfulness (5MM).

This four-hour course will enable participants to identify and understand:

1. The course includes an introduction to suicide prevention outlining the risk /protective factors and warning signs for suicide, as told through documentary footage featuring national suicidologists.
2. The course outlines renowned evidence-based models, such as CONNECT Postvention, Living Works programs, and Sources of Strength. It also provides connection to national and local agencies, research institutions and additional training information^{1 2}.
3. Most importantly, the course directs individuals to the appropriate local and national suicide crisis response protocols and teaches best practices on getting the conversation started with an individual who may be struggling.
4. Participants in this course will learn best practices for postvention and will receive access to a library of primary prevention tools and resources suitable for youth.

History and Evidence-Base.

The SSPP course has been deployed since 2017 in multiple Sharpen settings including with over 500 veterans, 5,000 foster parents, 5,500 educators and over 1,600 college students. The SSP training was developed by the Sharpen CEO after 7 years directing community suicide prevention research and implementation efforts in South Carolina in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health - Office of Suicide Prevention. The individuals involved in designing the program serve at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Education Development Center through the Zero Suicide initiative³.

¹ Bailey, E., Spittal, M. J., Pirkis, J., Gould, M., & Robinson, J. (2017). Universal suicide prevention in young people: An evaluation of the safeTALK program in Australian high schools. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 38(5), 300-308.

² Shannonhouse L, Lin Y-W D, Shaw K, Wanna R, Porter M (2017): Suicide intervention training for college staff: Program evaluation and intervention skill measurement. *Journal of American College Health*, 65(7), 450-456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2017.1341893>

³ See more about Dr. Karydi [here](#).



This course will help university staff assess and address mental health needs of student and adult learners, and improve educational life outcomes by improving protective factors for mental wellbeing. Mental health literacy interventions can provide individuals with the tools they need to reduce stress, such as coping mechanisms and improved awareness surrounding mental illness⁴. Protective factors, such as those that ‘buffer’ or ‘protect’ one from the effects of negative life experiences, risk factors, or other life stressors, can reduce the likelihood of an individual developing a mental health disorder and improve resiliency. Common protective factors may include but are not limited to mindfulness based stress reduction and psychoeducation⁵.

Recognizability

Resiliency Technologies, Inc. has created a mental health education / prevention service called Sharpen which is available through both mobile and desktop applications and is created using best practices in public health research, incorporating suicide prevention⁶, resiliency⁷, and mental health literacy⁸. Through its modular content, Sharpen improves eight primary protective factors

⁴ Riebschleger, J., Costello, S., Cavanaugh, D. L., & Grové, C. (2019). Mental Health Literacy of Youth That Have a Family Member With a Mental Illness: Outcomes From a New Program and Scale [Original Research]. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2019.00002>

⁵ Riebschleger et al., 2019.

⁶ Karydi, A., Davis, T., Husa-Farrell, R. The Spartanburg South Carolina suicide prevention task force was created and led by Robyn Husa Farrell for 4 years in collaboration with the Office of Suicide Prevention, led by Dr. Alex Karydi and Taylor Davis, Ed.S. who wrote the suicide prevention plan for the state of South Carolina and for SC schools through the Department of Education. It was through this (and other) research and statewide collaborations that the Sharpen system was developed.

⁷ Between 2017-2019 Sharpen was deployed to educators who participated in 3 day resiliency training including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and primary prevention programs to build community resiliency, led by Dr. Jennifer Parker and the University of South Carolina Upstate Child Protection Training Center. Sharpen’s CEO served as the invited mindfulness / resiliency presenter on Day 3 of the Compassionate Schools / Resilient Schools summits between 2016-2019. The 5 Minute Mindfulness training for educators that is currently in the Sharpen service, was a 1.5 hour component of the 3rd day of the Compassionate Schools initiative. After each workshop, educators received access to Sharpen to explore more topics on childhood trauma and resilience, along with tools to increase their own self-care, mental health literacy and best practices for prevention mental health and substance use disorders in the school setting. (Parker, J., Olson, S. & Bunde, J. The Impact of Trauma-Based Training on Educators. *Journ Child Adol Trauma* 13, 217–227 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00261-5>.)

⁸ Every module in Sharpen’s course library is created using the MHL framework and (1) improves understanding of how to obtain / maintain good mental health; (2) improves understanding of various mental disorders and their treatments; (3) decreases stigma related to mental disorders through peer documentary film stories; (4) increases connection to treatment and help-seeking (Kutcher, S., Wei, Y., Costa, S., Gusmão, R., Skokauskas, N., & Sourander, A. (2016). Enhancing mental health literacy in young people. *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 25(6), 567-



that were inspired by the research of Neumark-Sztainer⁹, Reupert¹⁰, and Burke-Harris¹¹. The evidence-based libraries are neutrally titled: Cope (improving SEL and coping skills); Thrive (decreasing stress); Nourish (nutritional support); and Heal (identifying signs, symptoms, and help).

Through data collection, focus groups and interdisciplinary research collaborations using the platform over the course of a decade, the Sharpen framework has shown to improve trauma-informed best practices¹² and overcome stigma through the use of peer-to-peer focused film content¹³. Previous research on the foundational content within the Sharpen app has shown success in building resilience in those with disordered eating and improving safety in managing mental health disorders in K12 schools¹⁴, improving coaching best practices regarding female athlete triad and disordered eating prevention¹⁵, improving engagement, pride and resilience in urban-rich communities¹⁶, and improving literacy, mindfulness and social-emotional skills in elementary,

569. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27236662>). Currently there are studies measuring the Sharpen MHL training program at Kennesaw State University, Emory University, USC Upstate and others.

⁹ Neumark-Sztainer, D. R., Wall, M. M., Haines, J. I., Story, M. T., Sherwood, N. E., & van den Berg, P. A. (2007). Shared risk and protective factors for overweight and disordered eating in adolescents. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 33(5), 359–369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2007.07.031>

¹⁰ Reupert A. A socio-ecological framework for mental health and well-being. *Adv Ment Health*. 2017;15(2):105–7.

¹¹ Bhushan D, Kotz K, McCall J, Wirtz S, Gilgoff R, Dube SR, Powers C, Olson-Morgan J, Galeste M, Patterson K, Harris L, Mills A, Bethell C, Burke Harris N, Office of the California Surgeon General. Roadmap for Resilience: The California Surgeon General’s Report on Adverse Childhood Experiences, Toxic Stress, and Health. Office of the California Surgeon General, 2020. DOI: 10.48019/PEAM8812.

¹² Husa-Farrell, R, Farrell, T, Witt, H. (2021). Sharpen Family: Building Resilience Through Trauma-Informed Technology and Rich Community Engagement. Southeastern School Behavioral Health Annual Conference (led by Dr. Mark Weist and the Behavioral Alliance of South Carolina), virtual abstract presentation, Myrtle Beach, April, 2021.

¹³ Data obtained through Sharpen’s 2020 year-end participant and client survey (n=57) and community based participatory research conducted between 2013-2020 through the Way to Wellville – Spartanburg initiative, Northside Development Group (Purposebuilt) initiative, and the Video Village initiative, funded through Bloomberg Philanthropies.

¹⁴ Anderson C, Holody K, Flynn M, Husa-Farrell R. An exploratory evaluation of the feasibility, acceptability, and efficacy of the mental fitness disordered eating program in schools. *Eating Disorders: J of Treat & Prev*. 2017 May-Jun;25(3):230-245.PMID: 28441121

¹⁵ Kroshus, E., Sherman, R.T., Thompson, R.A., Sossin, K., & Austin, S.B. (2014). Gender difference in high school coaches’ knowledge, attitudes and communication about the female athlete triad. *Eating Disorders*, 22, 193-208.

¹⁶ Between 2015 and 2017 the co-Founders of Sharpen served as co-Directors in a Bloomberg Philanthropies-funded \$1 million dollar grant through the City of Spartanburg and Chapman Cultural Center. As co-Directors of the “Video Village” public art installation, the directors converted 52 windows in an abandoned public housing project

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middle school and high school youth¹⁷. Further, we have shown that providing access to gold-standard mental health screening¹⁸, dramatically increases engagement with mental health treatment¹⁹.

At Edward Via College of Osteopathic (VCOM) Carolinas Campus the founders of Sharpen have collaborated with research teams to study the overall impact of the Sharpen service, and:

into video displays for community-based documentary films. The project focused in the Highland neighborhood of Spartanburg, SC. Husa and Farrell gathered over 100 resident and police interviews, and created over 2 hours of documentary films alongside the residents. One outcome of the work was that, after deep, personal interviews with their neighbors, the Highland Community Association rejected additional high-density public housing and received funding from the City of Spartanburg to create a neighborhood planning commission. In addition, one of the documentaries created with the residents and police officers has become a required tool for new officer training in the City of Spartanburg, as part of community-based policing practices. The equipment used to create Video Village was repurposed for a computer lab and code school training facility in the local community center. That lab is still in operation (called "Innovation Village"). Finally, as an additional outcome of this project, we saw evidence that asking residents to serve as their own experts increases collaboration and engagement. Over 100 residents of Highland participated in the project and it inspired our Way to Wellville to engage in a "listening campaign" to learn more from residents. Our team was asked to present at several national conferences as a result of this work alongside leaders from Way to Wellville – Spartanburg. The Bloomberg Public Art program across the US is currently being evaluated by researchers at Brookings Institution. The Video Village project was evaluated by Dr. Michelle Covington, researcher in public safety at University South Carolina Upstate.

¹⁷ Parker, J., Olson, S. & Bunde, J. The Impact of Trauma-Based Training on Educators. *Journ Child Adol Trauma* 13, 217–227 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00261-5>.

¹⁸ Sheehan, D. V., Lecrubier, Y., Sheehan, K. H., Amorim, P., Janavs, J., Weiller, E., Hergueta, T., Baker, R., & Dunbar, G. C. (1998). The Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview (M.I.N.I.): the development and validation of a structured diagnostic psychiatric interview for DSM-IV and ICD-10. *The Journal of clinical psychiatry*, 59 Suppl 20, 22–57.

¹⁹ Burnette, C., Hall, C., Husa Farrell, R., Farrell, T. (2017). Sharpen Warrior beta test through survey evaluation of 160 veterans and VA clinicians. Sharpen Up Colleges focus group and survey evaluation of 400+ college students at University of South Carolina Upstate and Wofford College was led, in part, by Dr. Andrew Beer at University of South Carolina, Upstate.



- resilience in middle school volleyball athletes^{20 21}
- mental health needs of medical students on the VCOM Carolinas campus^{22 23}
- mental health needs of college students during COVID²⁴
- decreasing shame and stigma around mental disorders among physicians-in-training²⁵

In addition, a selection of other research studies are listed below to provide examples of how other academic institutions are currently utilizing the Sharpen system:

- At Stanford Medical School, researchers are using Sharpen as a DBT intervention for adolescent youth²⁶
- Working in collaboration with New York State Office of Mental Health suicide prevention coalitions, Sharpen is being utilized as a suicide prevention tool for LGBTQIA+ youth²⁷

²⁰ Patrizi, J., Jones, A., Bishop, B., Stoner, AM., Fadel, NM., Bendyk, H. Courtside Mindfulness—Keep Your Head in the Game: The Effects of 8-Week Mindfulness Training on Adolescent Volleyball Athletes. American Psychiatric Association Annual Conference, San Francisco. Poster

Presentation. May 2019.

²¹ Fadel NM, Stoner AM, Patrizi J, Bendyk H. The Effects of Mindfulness Training on Adolescent Volleyball Athletes: A Pilot Trial (7/2018-present). Study completed and journal submission in progress. Program design and findings were presented at the American Psychiatric Association annual conference in May 2019 and VCOM research day.

²² Fadel NM, Garner, H, Stoner, AM, Ridgeway, L, Cheng, N, Hussa-Farrell, R, Farrell, T, Berreta, K, Afkinich, K. A Mental Health and Wellness App For Osteopathic Medical Students. (6/2019-present). Initial results and program presented virtually at the 2020 American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) Annual Educating Leaders Conference.

²³ Fadel NM, Stoner AM, Rountree B, Hussa-Farrell R, Farrell T. The Usability Of A Mental Health App Among Osteopathic Medical Student (10/2017-present) and validation of the Sharpen Resiliency Scale. Final data evaluation being completed in Spring, 2021 with anticipated journal publication.

²⁴ Fadel NM, Stoner AM, Rountree B, Hussa-Farrell R, Farrell T. The Usability Of A Mental Health App Among Osteopathic Medical Student (10/2017-present) and validation of the Sharpen Resiliency Scale. Final data evaluation being completed in Spring, 2021 with anticipated journal publication.

²⁵ Fadel, NM, Stoner AM, Hussa-Farrell R, Farrell T, Gainey, M. Eating Disorder Prevention and Identification Training for HealthCare Professionals. Feasibility study launching spring 2023 with data evaluation completed in Fall, 2023.

²⁶ Cosgrove, V., Van Meeter, A. (2022). Assessing the effectiveness of Sharpen® to deliver DBT intervention to middle school and high school patients. Anticipated manuscript completed in December, 2023.

²⁷ Karydi, A. et al. Grant funded through NY State to deploy Sharpen® to LGBTQIA+ youth and create strength-based suicide prevention content. Anticipated completion date December, 2023.



- At Kennesaw State University, researchers are utilizing Sharpen to improve college student mental health literacy²⁸
- With researchers from Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, VCOM and Boston Children’s Hospital, Sharpen is engaged in an IRB study with medical students and residents to measure increased compliance, screening competence and reduction in stigma around the topic of eating disorders.
- With South Carolina Foster Parent Association and United Way of the Piedmont, Sharpen is measuring parent stress reduction and increased knowledge of mental health literacy with foster parents throughout the state of South Carolina²⁹.
- With researchers from Emory and Baylor, Sharpen is being deployed as an MBSR toolkit to serve adolescent youth³⁰.

All participants will receive a training certificate indicating the number of hours completed. For licensed clinicians who qualify, they will receive 4 hours of continuing education for this course, accredited through NBCC and the University of West Georgia.

Sharpen SPP program was created in collaboration with the SC Office of Suicide Prevention as part of a 5 year suicide prevention effort led by [Dr. Alex Karydi \(Education Development Center\)](#).

Relevant Conference and Workshop Presentations

Karydi, A., Davis, T., **Hussa Farrell, R.** (2017-2023). The Spartanburg South Carolina suicide prevention task force was created and led by Robyn Hussa Farrell in 2017 in collaboration with the Office of Suicide Prevention, led by Dr. Alex Karydi who wrote the suicide prevention plan for the state of South Carolina and for SC schools through the Department of Education. The 5MM program was deployed as a training for suicide prevention task force members in Columbia and Spartanburg and utilized as a core part of the suicide prevention toolkits available to youth.

²⁸ Biber, D. D. & Stewart, B. (in review). The impact of the Heads up Checkup behavioral health screening and Sharpen® mental health literacy training for college athletes. Presentation in review for the 2023 American College Health Association Annual Meeting, Boston, MA and awaiting review from Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice.

²⁹ Biber, D. D. (2023). Evaluation of Sharpen® MHL program to improve foster parent resilience. 9,000 foster parents trained in a 5 hour Sharpen course. Submitted January 2023, in review.

³⁰ Gazmararian, J., Graybill, S., Boedeker, P., Biber, D., Meyer, A., Hussa-Farrell, R., Farrell, T. Girls Empowering Movement (GEM): Integrating Mindfulness and Movement for Positive Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Health. NIH grant application review in process.



Hussa Farrell, R. (2021, 2022). Trauma-informed best practices for schools. 2021 and 2022 Attachment & Trauma Network annual conference (virtual presentations).

Hussa Farrell, R. (June – July, 2016; June-July, 2017). “Stress-Management and Mindfulness for Traumatized Children.” Data and evidence-based mindfulness techniques presented at Compassionate Schools Summer Summit, University of South Carolina – Upstate Child Advocacy Studies, SC.

Hussa Farrell, R. (October, 2016). “Stress-Management and Mindfulness for Traumatized Children.” Evidence-based techniques presented at South Carolina Association of School Social Workers Fall Conference in Pawleys Island, South Carolina.

Hussa Farrell, R. (2013-2018). “5MM peer resiliency program for adolescent youth.” Peer resiliency program for Spartanburg Day School, Meeting Street Academy and Spartanburg District 7 Schools, Spartanburg, SC.

Hussa Farrell, R. (2010-2016). Various trainings, workshops and presentations at NYU Silver School of Social Work, Common Day.

References Cited

Biber, D., Rothman, R., Abel, C., Hussa-Farrell, R. (2022, in review). Evaluation of Sharpen Mental Health Literacy Training Program for College Females. Submitted for publication to *Pedagogy in Health Promotion*: July, 2022.

Bhushan D, Kotz K, McCall J, Wirtz S, Gilgoff R, Dube SR, Powers C, Olson-Morgan J, Galeste M, Patterson K, Harris L, Mills A, Bethell C, Burke Harris N, Office of the California Surgeon General. Roadmap for Resilience: The California Surgeon General's Report on Adverse Childhood Experiences, Toxic Stress, and Health. Office of the California Surgeon General, 2020. DOI: 10.48019/PEAM8812.

Chesin, M., Interian, A., Kline, A., Benjamin-Phillips, C., Latorre, M., Stanley, B. (2016) Reviewing Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Suicidal Behavior, *Archives of Suicide Research*, 20:4, 507-527, DOI: 10.1080/13811118.2016.1162244

Dindo, L., Van Liew, J. R., & Arch, J. J. (2017). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: A Transdiagnostic Behavioral Intervention for Mental Health and Medical Conditions. *Neurotherapeutics : the journal of the American Society for Experimental NeuroTherapeutics*, 14(3), 546–553. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13311-017-0521-3>

Fadel N., Garner, H., Stoner, A., Ridgeway, L., Cheng, N., **Hussa Farrell, R.**, Farrell, T., Berreta, K., Afkinich, K. (2019). A Mental Health and Wellness App For Osteopathic Medical Students. (6/2019-present). Initial results and program presented virtually at the 2020 American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM). Findings will be



presented at 2023 American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) Annual Conference.

Luoma, J. B., & Villatte, J. L. (2012). Mindfulness in the Treatment of Suicidal Individuals. *Cognitive and behavioral practice*, 19(2), 265–276.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2010.12.003>

Parker, J., Olson, S. & Bunde, J. The Impact of Trauma-Based Training on Educators. *Journ Child Adol Trauma* 13, 217–227 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00261-5>.

Patrizi, J., Jones, A., Bishop, B., Stoner, AM., Fadel, N., Bendyk, H. Courtside Mindfulness—Keep Your Head in the Game: The Effects of 8-Week Mindfulness Training on Adolescent Volleyball Athletes. American Psychiatric Association Annual Conference, San Francisco. Poster Presentation. May 2019.

About Sharpen

Sharpen® is an evidence-based, trauma-informed mental health platform that has shown to improve mental health outcomes through the provision of technology that delivers individually-focused, award-winning, and community-driven content (Hussa-Farrell et al, 2021). Sharpen focuses on improving shared protective factors of both individuals and communities by increasing resiliency, mental health literacy, and productivity of users (Hussa-Farrell et al, 2021). Sharpen and its library of over 100 award-winning courses has been used for over five years as professional development training tools for licensed clinicians, educators and peer mentors and has shown to improve suicide prevention best practices (Karydi et al, 2017-2021), improve confidence and competence in assisting an individual or student who may be struggling (Anderson et al, 2017; Patrizi et al, 2019; Fadel et al 2020), decreasing shame and stigma around mental health topics (Fadel et al 2020), improving mental health literacy for school professionals and educators (Anderson et al, 2017), pediatricians (Haddad et al, 2015), and medical students (Fadel et al, 2020). Most notably, the Sharpen system was used to train elementary educators how to lead mindfulness interventions for children ages four to seven in Title 1 schools. The program not only improved health outcomes, but academic outcomes including increased literacy and decreased disciplinary action (Bauer et al, 2019; Parker et al, 2021). Sharpen contains the award-winning peer resiliency program, *Flourish*: a disordered eating prevention program designed and led at Spartanburg Day School in South Carolina, created in collaboration with pediatricians and licensed mental health professionals. The program ran over the course of five years, with over 15 students each year who were trained on the curriculum and then went to mentor elementary aged children in building protective factors such as improving body esteem, mindfulness, social emotional learning and mindfulness based stress reduction (Hussa Farrell 2015-2020).