

***The Difference Support Makes in Developing  
Resilience:  
What Face It Foundation Has to Teach Us All***

Minnesota Council on Family Relations  
Fall Conference

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“What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?”

Roger Bannister, MD

# Face It Foundation



# Our Mission

*“Leveraging the power of Peer Support, Face It works with men to confront the epidemic of suicide and help them recover from depression and anxiety.”*

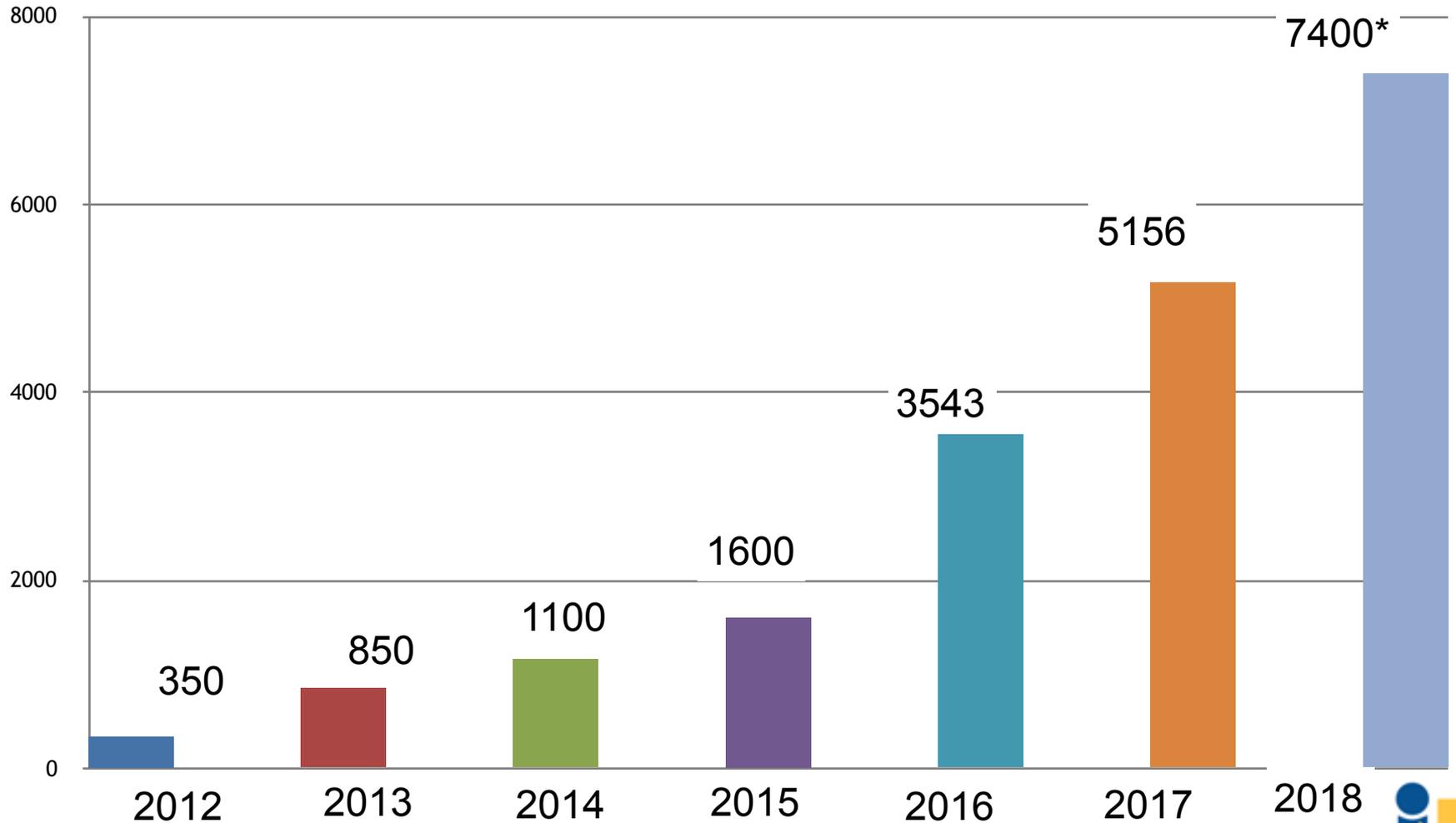
# Face It Provides

(All Services are free)

- Men's Groups
- Men's Retreats
- 1:1 Support
- Peer Support Network
- Monthly Social Activities
- Education
- Online Tools
- Texting/Telephone support

# Peer Support Hours

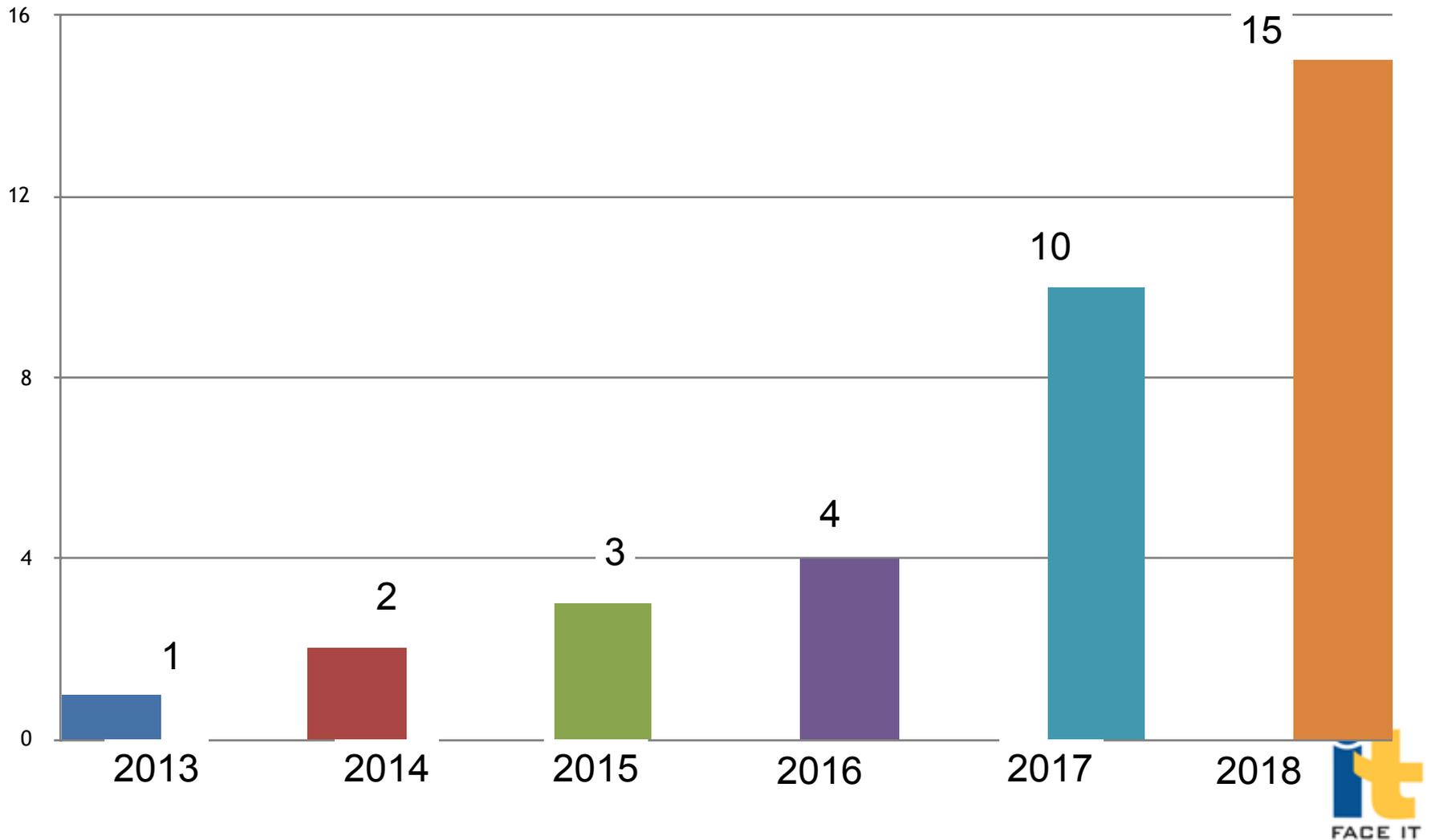
(Support Groups, Men's Weekend,  
Text/Email/Phone Support, 1:1 Interactions)



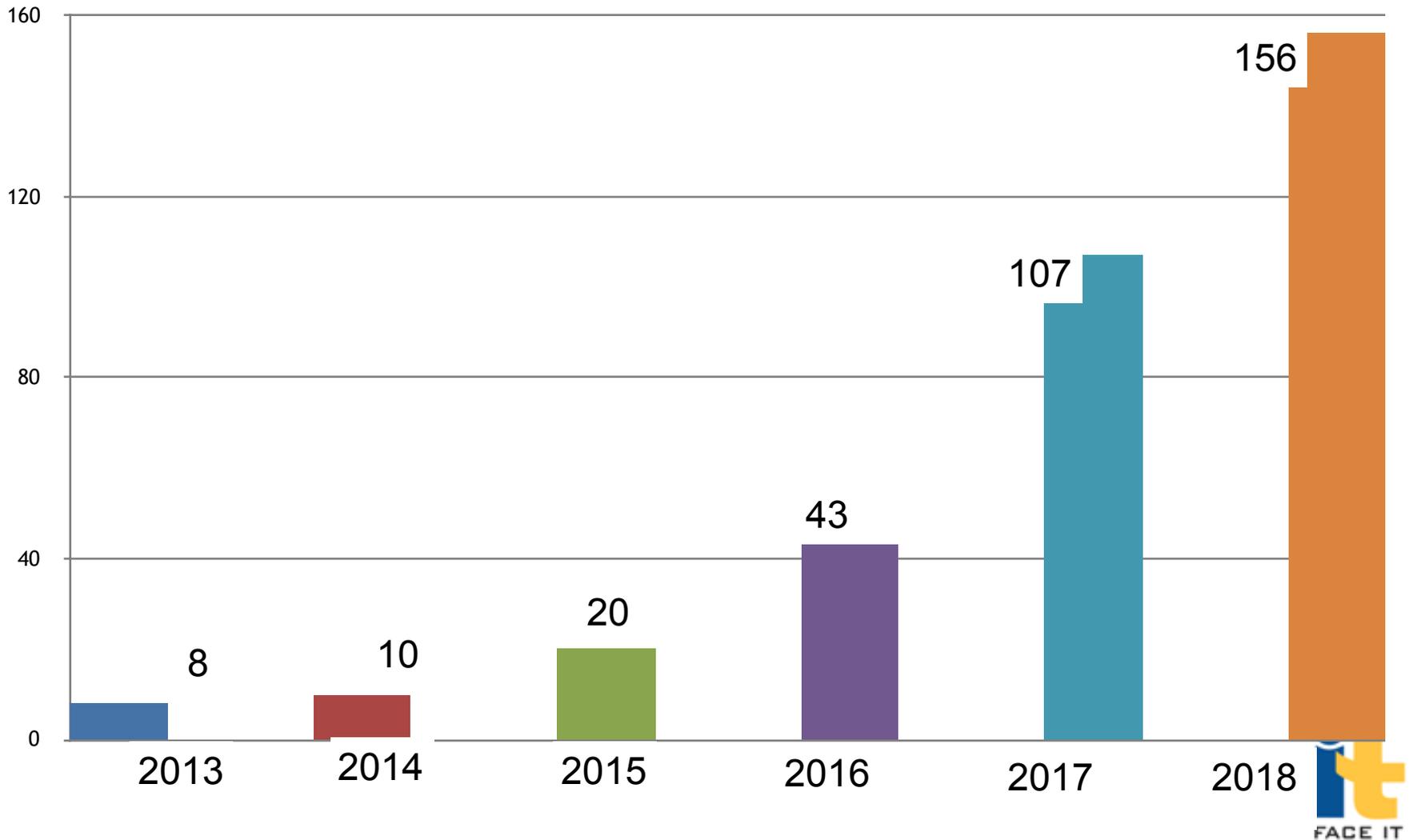
\* Projected



# Number of Support Groups Offered



# Number of Men Utilizing Support Groups



# What I “Know” About Resilience

## *Professional*

- Clinician - 24 years
- Face It Foundation
- Consultant
- 350+Presentations

## *Academic*

- U of MN Faculty
- School of Medicine
- School of Social Work
- Center for Depression Research & Clinical Care- U of Texas SW Medical Center
- National Network of Depression Centers

# What Has Shaped My Resilience

## *Professional*

- Clinician - 24 years
- Face It Foundation
- Consultant
- 350+Presentations

## *Academic*

- U of MN Faculty
- School of Medicine
- School of Social Work
- Center for Depression Research & Clinical Care- U of Texas SW Medical Center
- National Network of Depression Centers

## *Patient*

- Depression, Anxiety, Substance use
- Hospitalization
- Treatment
- Recovery



# My ACE's

- Childhood memories/Environment
  - Multiple life disruptions due to brother's illness
  - Shy, isolative in nature
  - Lack self-confidence
  - Lots of anxiety
  - High expectations of self/Perfectionist
  - Significant 8<sup>th</sup> Grade bullying experience
  - Poor coping strategies

# My ACE's

- High School and College
  - Chronic stress
  - Anxiety issues
  - Survived serious truck accident
  - Recent physical assault
  - Difficulty with school
  - First experiences with suicidal thoughts/  
behavior

# While I...

- Graduated from college and Graduate School
- Married and children
- Promotions and awards

# And I....

- Began to shut others out
- Develop my mask of “happiness”
- Turn to substances
- Developed my sharp wit and ANGER
- Lived what appeared to be the “Good Life” despite profound isolation and LONELINESS
- Honed my story of “pain, victimhood, and shame”

# Resilience & Support...

## What Face It Has Taught Me

# The Lessons

1. Men are struggling in silence with a disease they don't understand (nor do many of us...)

# We Have Always Been Told

“About twice as many women as men experience depression. Several factors may increase a woman's risk of depression.”

[www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/art-20047725](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/art-20047725) - Accessed June 9, 2017



# What If We Ask Men...

During the past month, have you or others noticed that your behavior has changed, and if so, in which way?	Not at all (0 pts)	To some extent (1 pt)	Very True (2 pts)	Extremely So (3 pts)
Lower stress threshold/more stressed out than usual				
More aggressive, outward-reacting, difficulties keeping self-control				
Feeling of being burned out and empty				
Constant, inexplicable tiredness				
More irritable, restless and frustrated				
Difficulty making ordinary everyday decisions				
Sleep problems: sleeping too much/too little/restlessly, difficulty falling asleep/waking up early				
In the morning especially, having a feeling of disquiet/anxiety/uneasiness				
Overconsumption of alcohol and pills in order to achieve a calming and relaxing effect. Being hyperactive or blowing off steam by working hard and restlessly, jogging or other exercises, under- or overeating				
Do you feel your behavior has altered in such a way the neither you, yourself, nor others can recognize you, and that you are difficult to deal with?				
Have you felt or have others perceived you as being gloomy, negative or characterized by a state of hopelessness in which everything looks bleak				
Have you or others noticed that you have a greater tendency for self-pity, to be complaining, or to seem "pathetic"?				
In your biological family, is there any tendency towards abuse, depression, suicide attempts or proneness to behavior involving danger?				

# It looks different...

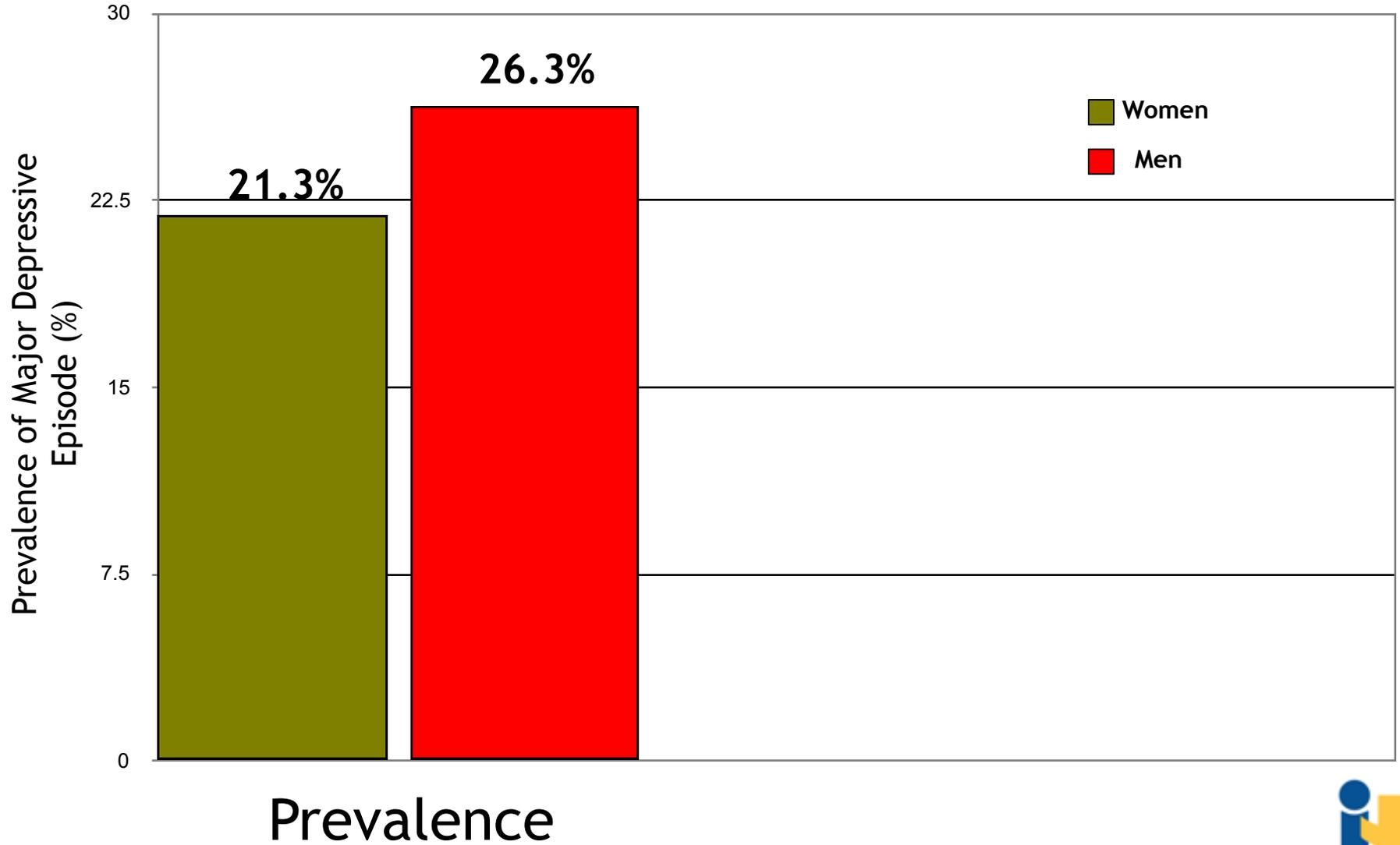
“Men reported higher rates of anger attacks/aggression, substance abuse, and risk taking compared with women. Analyses using the scale that included alternative, male-type symptoms of depression found that a higher proportion of men (26.3%) than women (21.9%) ( $P = .007$ ) met criteria for depression.”

The Experience of Symptoms of Depression in Men vs Women Analysis of the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Lisa A. Martin, PhD; Harold W. Neighbors, PhD; Derek M. Griffith, PhD  
*JAMA Psychiatry*. 2013;70(10):1100-1106. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2013



# Gender

Chart Title

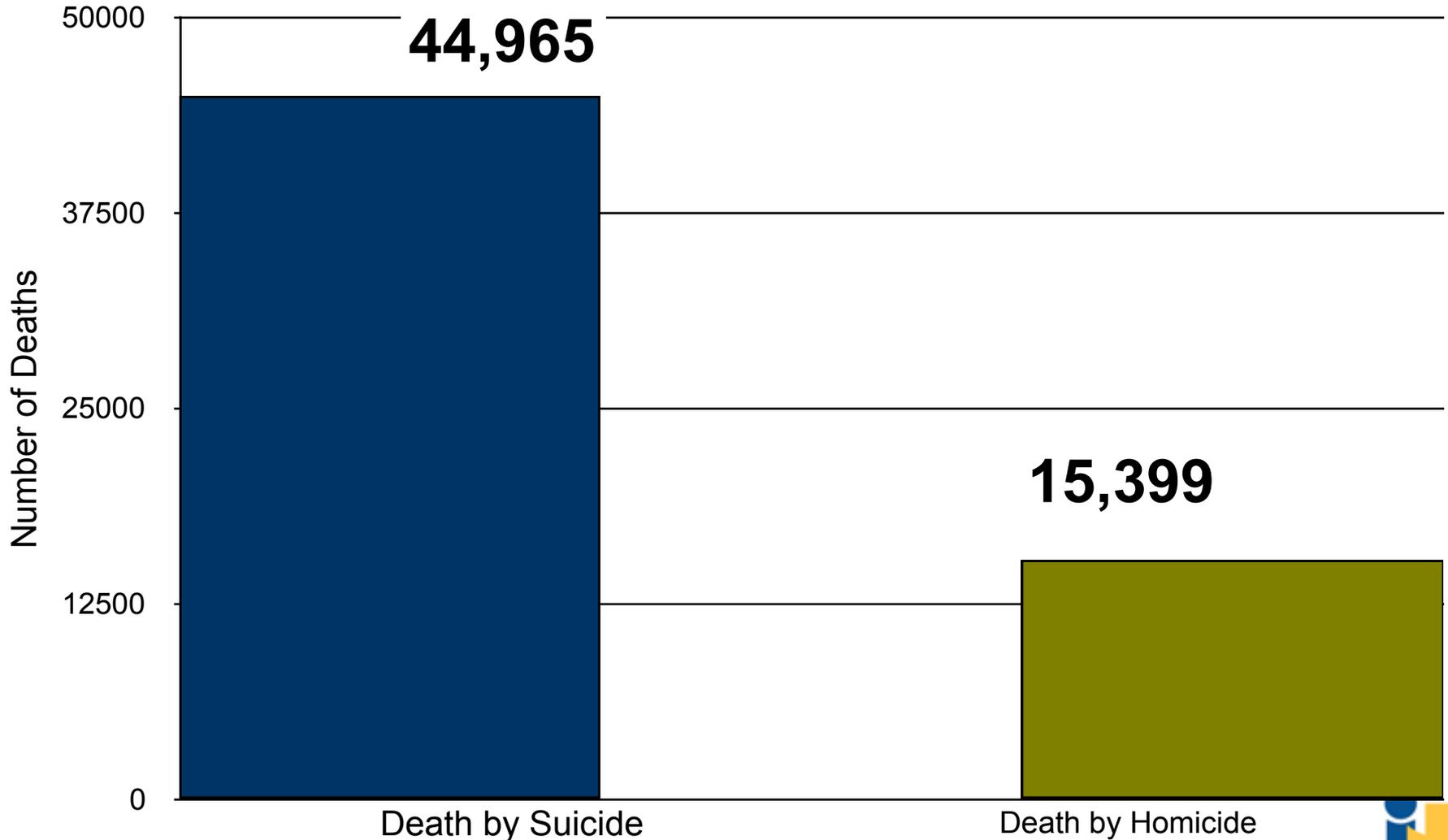


# The Lessons

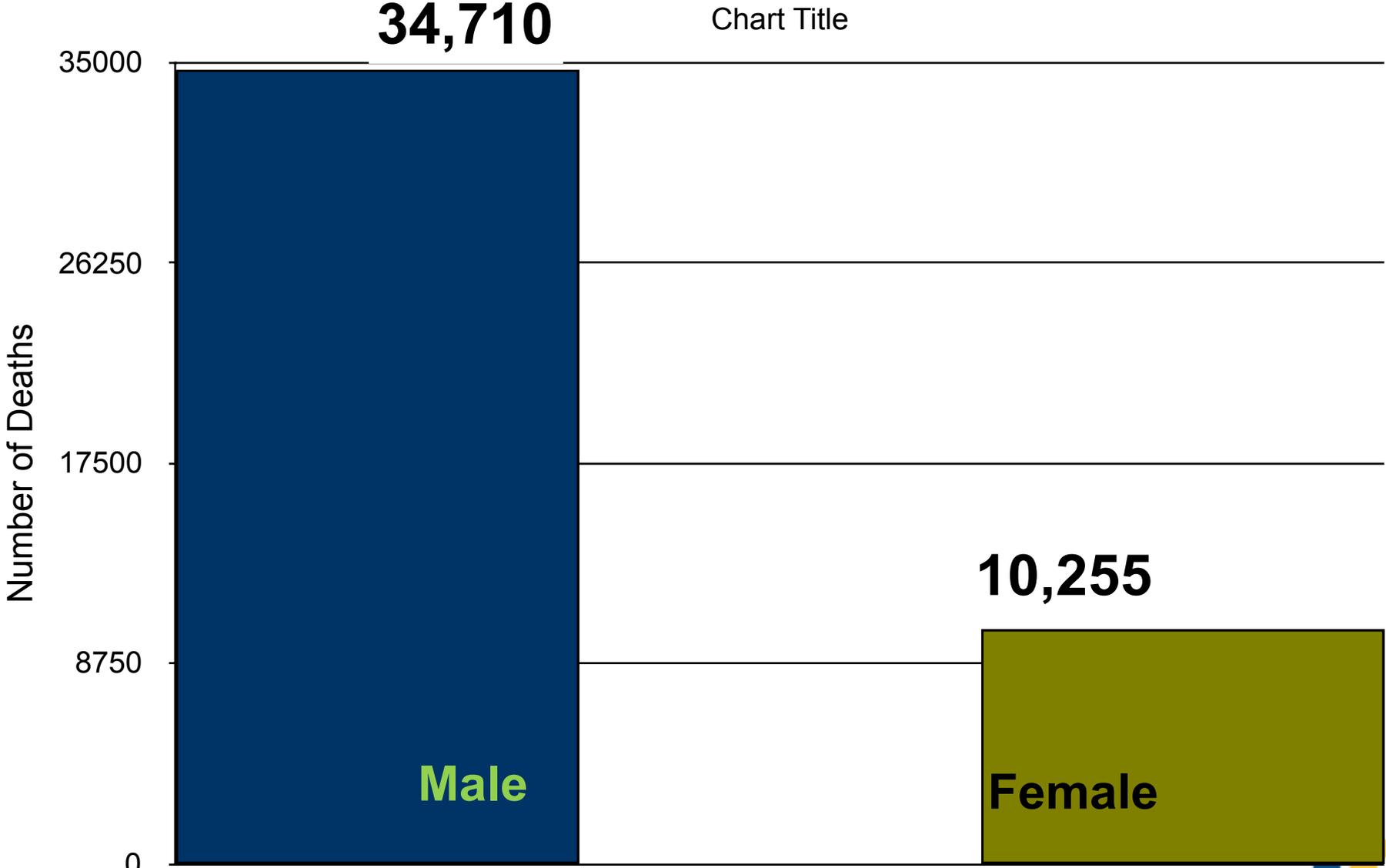
1. Men are struggling in silence with a disease they don't understand (nor do many of us...)
2. They are dying at unprecedented rates

# Suicide vs. Homicide - 2016

Chart Title



# Suicide by Gender



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Data & Statistics Fatal Injury Report for 2016



# Suicide

“There is no single cause to suicide. It most often occurs when stressors exceed current coping abilities of someone suffering from a mental health condition.”

<https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/> Accessed May 8, 2017



# Suicide

- White males accounted for 7 of 10 suicides in 2016.
- The rate of suicide is highest in middle age – white men in particular.

<https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/> Accessed May 8, 2017



# The Lessons

1. Men are struggling in silence with a disease they don't understand (nor do many of us...)
2. They are dying at unprecedented rates
3. Their “ACE’s” are many and they have an overwhelming need to MINIMIZE them

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

(many of which play out recurrent themes throughout life!)

- Physical and emotional abuse
- Bullying and other demeaning experiences
- Lack of connection with their father...

“He never said it, but I just know he loved me...I think he did anyway”

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

(many of which play out recurrent themes throughout life!)

- Physical and emotional abuse
- Bullying and other demeaning experiences
- Lack of connection with their father...
- Unrealistic early education about “being a man”
  - early exposure to porn and other age inappropriate sexual experiences
  - Sexual Abuse...carried in shame for years!

# Their Personal Narrative

- “Get over it”
- “My childhood was perfectly normal”
- “It’s not like anything bad happened to me”
- “I have so much, I shouldn’t complain”
- “I am being such a #\$\$%@& baby”
- “I wasn’t in the hospital or didn’t try to kill myself, I shouldn’t even be here”

# The Lessons

1. Men are struggling in silence with a disease they don't understand (nor do many of us...)
2. They are dying at unprecedented rates
3. Their “ACE’s” are many and they have an overwhelming need to MINIMIZE them
4. They don't know where or how to start!

# Men Are Taught

- Avoidance of emotional expression

# *“Why Are So Many Men Dying By Suicide?”*

“So what gives? Being a man in the U.S., and around the world, too often means learning to suppress our emotional experience, so much so that we as men often lack even the language to express or understand our emotions. Some psychologists have called this alexithymia—the inability to connect with and communicate one’s emotions—and identified it as more prominent in males. Quite simply, if men can’t recognize negative or troubling emotions, and can’t or don’t seek help or talk about them, we don’t know what to do when we face them.”

# Alexithymia

- is a personality construct characterized by the subclinical inability to identify and describe emotions in the self. The core characteristics of alexithymia are marked dysfunction in emotional awareness, social attachment, and interpersonal relating.

"Experiments show that when people are primed to feel high levels of distress, the quickest to recover are those who can identify how they are feeling and put those feelings into words. Brain scans show that verbal information almost immediately diminishes the power of those negative emotions, improving well-being and enhancing decision-making skills."

The Happiness Advantage: How a Positive Brain Fuels Success in Work and Life



© Cartoonbank.com



*"Could we up the dosage? I still have feelings."*

# The Lessons

1. Men are struggling in silence with a disease they don't understand (nor do many of us...)
2. They are dying at unprecedented rates
3. Their "ACE's" are many and they have an overwhelming need to MINIMIZE them
4. They don't know where or how to start!
5. They're lonely and isolated

*“The biggest threat facing middle-age men isn’t smoking or obesity. It’s loneliness”*

Boston Globe Magazine 2017

“In 2015, a huge study out of Brigham Young University, using data from 3.5 million people collected over 35 years, found that those who fall into categories of loneliness, isolation (disproportionate number of men), or even simply living on their own see their risk of premature death rise 26 to 32 percent.”



*“Loneliness is killing millions of American men. Here’s why.”*

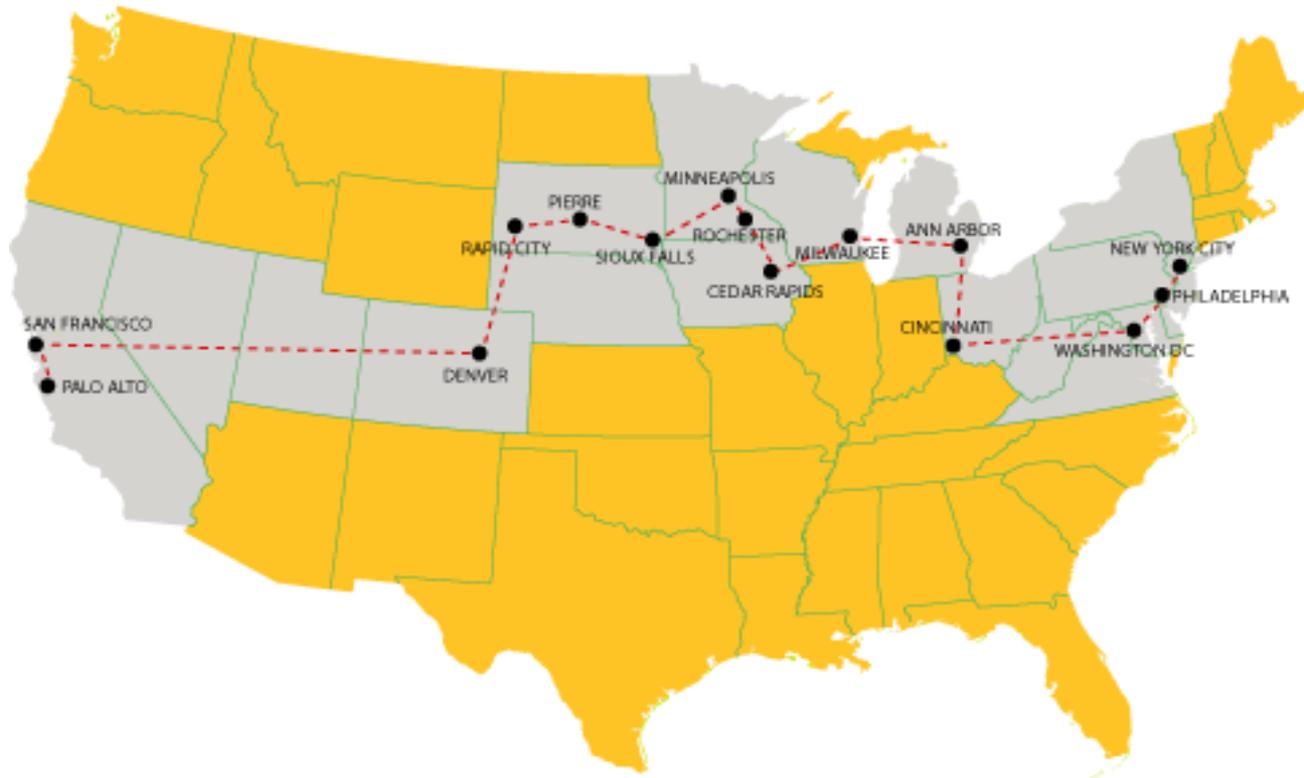
“research shows that boys in early adolescence express deeply fulfilling emotional connection and love for each other, but by the time they reach adulthood, that sense of connection evaporates. This is a catastrophic loss; a loss we somehow assume men will simply adjust to. They do not. **Millions of men are experiencing a sense of deep loss that haunts them even though they are engaged in fully realized romantic relationships, marriages, and families.**”

<https://www.upworthy.com/loneliness-is-killing-millions-of-american-men-here-s-why>

Accessed November 2, 2018



# The Journey of a Lifetime



# Rick



# Oklahoma Larry



# David



# So how do we help them?

- We begin by understanding ourselves and our own beliefs about the men we are helping

# Consider This...

“We have been trained to choose surface level relationships or no relationships at all, sleepwalking through our lives out of fear that we will not be viewed as real men. We keep the loving natures that once came so naturally (in our youth) hidden and locked away.”

# So how do we help them?

- We begin by understanding ourselves and our own beliefs about the men we are helping
- We begin to think about new ways to reach men

# Building Peer Support

“Well-designed and executed peer support interventions empower patients to improve the management of their health and provide meaningful opportunities for patients to help others facing similar challenges.”

Building Peer Support Programs to Manage Chronic Disease: Seven Models for Success. California Healthcare Foundation, 2006



# Peer Support

“The pooled results from randomized controlled trials indicate that peer support interventions improve depression symptoms more than usual care alone and that the effects may be comparable to those of group cognitive behavioral therapy.”

Efficacy of peer support interventions for depression: a meta-analysis. *General Hospital Psychiatry* 33 (2011) pp 29-36



# Peer Support

- Men often learn by listening to others stories
- Creates accountability
- Provides mentors and “sponsors”

# And...

- It can provide a place for men to begin to understand and build intimate relationships with others..

# What I Know

- ACE's are real, they're prevalent, and they follow us through life...until we make peace with them
- Trauma and it's co-existing realities are complex and helping others navigate them is a big job

# What I Know

- My life is far richer as I've learned to allow vulnerability and connection
- People need each other!



# Thank You

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