

## **ASIST & Leadership**

### Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and its synergy to Leadership

Leadership means different things to different people. Most would agree that a leader has a vision and builds upon it. There may not be as much agreement about how that is accomplished. Strong leadership usually means a leader who is charismatic and decisive. On the other hand, passive leadership typically means the group has an informal leader who influences its membership. Some leaders are inspiring because they 'lead the parade' and grasp/endorse a winning idea when they see one. Other leaders are great because they 'share the wealth': they mentor and grow leaders like themselves. Most leaders also have a style finesse to make execution of their ideas appear seamless and easy. Military leadership also has unique traits with a "get the job done philosophy", and a heavy emphasis on decision-making. Typically, military leaders focus on identifying a problem, decide on a solution and get on with it. There is a heavy reliance on establishing a clear understanding of the mission objectives and then a delegation of responsibility right down the chain of command. They avoid micromanagement.

So what does ASIST have to do with leadership?

ASIST is a two-day, interactive workshop that prepares helpers to provide suicide first aid interventions. Based on adult learning principles, it has lots of small group discussions and time to practice new skills. By the end of an ASIST workshop you will be better able to identify and help people who have thoughts of suicide. You may also have a better grasp of/handle on how beliefs and attitudes in you, your organization and the wider civilian community can affect suicide interventions. ASIST explores a shared understanding of the reasons for thoughts of suicide and the reasons for living. ASIST also reviews current risk and develops a plan to increase safety from suicidal behavior for an agreed amount of time. The workshop encourages follow-up on safety commitments accessing if further help is needed.

Why take ASIST – because you will never know when you need it!

A colleague of mine, probably thought when he was interviewing and exploring a job opportunity with LivingWorks, that his ASIST Training would never be needed. I am sure that in his mind he knew no one that was suicidal...

But, what happened one-day was a real-life experience that he may never have again.

A lady in an elevator was on her cell phone talking to a family member: her expression and her conversation may have been distracting and disruptive. We

as humans prefer to ignore what is not in our immediate realm of being and doing. However, when another human is in trouble our most common instinct/response is to help if we can. After a couple of seconds of the ride down; my colleague could hear that the person on the other end of the phone was in trouble. He stepped in, asked the lady for the phone and started a caring conversation with a total and complete stranger, --yes a stranger. Someone he knew nothing about, someone he had really no idea was in trouble except that the signs from the person on the phone indicated he needed to do something. The person on the other end of the phone was in trouble, needed help and was asking to be helped. Making a long story short, my colleague employed everything he learned from his ASIST training and intervened successfully with a person who had thoughts of suicide.

The connections between ASIST and Leadership are not right in front of your eyes or even pointed out. But in the story above, it is pretty clear /obvious how leadership kicked in as an important part of helping. In fact, there are real /obvious decided parallels between ASIST delivery and the precision of military styling.

Personal leadership is required to complete the training and intervene with persons at risk. ASIST provides similar strategies, as do the military processes needed to lead people and staff. ASIST requires adaptation and changing leadership styles from directive, to persuasive, to be able to truly intervene. ASIST, like leadership requires back and forth negotiations in meetings and dealing with others to accomplish the task at hand. Separately an ASIST trained individual and a person at risk of suicide -- combine to become a powerful duo. Overall, leadership in work and life combines the best of integrating behaviors used to accomplish the task, like ASIST these behaviors result in an intervention.

This is why you should take ASIST, the leading suicide intervention training in the world.

The leadership of the dedicated founders of LivingWorks have tirelessly worked to design and develop leading programs that empower helpers like you to use their skills in suicide-intervention...a lifetime commitment to suicide-safer communities around the world.

Full stop. No more to say. Take the training, employ the skills that one day -- out of nowhere – will help YOU save a life!!!

From Lynne Sterritt  
VP, Marketing & Communications  
LivingWorks Education Inc.

**Leadership Competencies Addressed:** *Leading Performance and Change, Leading the Coast Guard, Leading Self*