

Devoted To:

- Improving academics
- Deterring violence
- Fostering resiliency
- Enhancing coping skills
- Reducing risk
- Preventing suicide

Riding without reins

[easing anxiety in students is vital to achievement]

The start of a new school year can signal the onset of fears and worries for some students. When unchecked, these anxious thoughts may lead to problems in emotional adjustment and academic success. At their worst, anxiety disorders may give rise to clinical depression and thoughts of suicide.

How much anxiety is “normal” for a child? Developmentally appropriate fears are a problem when they do not subside, but instead impair a child’s day-to-day functioning, say experts. This was the case for Pinedale youth Garrett Bardin, who struggled with anxiety and perfectionism. Garrett died by suicide in 2008 when he was 23.

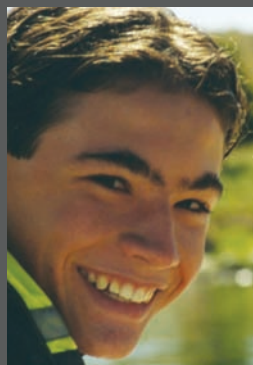
Schools and youth-serving organizations in Wyoming can help children grappling with anxiety disorders that can be performance, separation or social in nature. Studies show that **children who are innately cautious, quiet and shy are more likely to develop anxiety disorder**. Adults can watch for signs of distress in children that could point to anxiety, and have the youngster seen by a clinician. The earlier children are evaluated, the better, say experts.

“Anxiety is so common, so well understood, that I think we should do more,” says David Shaffer, M.D., an expert in youth suicide. “Schools can really help by building depression, anxiety, impulsivity into regular biology or health classes.”



Sublette County Sheriff Wayne “Bardy” Bardin never thought his only son would die before him—much less by suicide. But Garrett, born in 1984, took his life in 2008, after struggling with what may have been anxiety disorder. Because he was an adult when he passed, Garrett did not benefit from his parents’ involvement in managing medication he was prescribed by his doctor. Had Bardy and Garrett’s mom, Carole Richie, been aware of the suicidal thoughts he was having, they might have been able to help Garrett. Instead, Bardy and Carole grieve the loss of their son to what might well have been a preventable death.

[case in point] Childhood smiles can be deceiving



Children can hide a lot, especially emotions that feel scary or uncomfortable for them. These include anxiety. Garrett Bardin of Pinedale, Wyoming is shown here, beaming at ages 4 and 13. Yet Garrett struggled with anxiety, and took his life in 2008 when he was just 23. His was a life unfinished, one his parents Carole Richie and Wayne “Bardy” Bardin keep alive through a foundation in his name at www.garrettspalms.org.

A policy bulletin for WYOMING EDUCATION LEADERS

- School Board Members
- Superintendents & Principals
- Curriculum Committees
- Student Services Directors
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- Wyoming Policymakers

inside

URGING YOU TO BE Well Aware



“... I’VE FOUND THAT THE HURT NEVER GOES AWAY ... THE HOLE IS THERE FOREVER ...”

A message to Wyoming Well Aware

2 readers from Sublette County Sheriff Wayne “Bardy” Bardin, survivor of his son’s suicide

[it doesn’t add up]

1 in 12

Drug-related hospital emergency dept. visits made by adolescents that are suicide attempts—double the rate found for those 25 and older.

SOURCE: Series of studies reported 7/13/2010 by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

1 in 5

American Indian young adults ages 18-25 who experienced serious psychological distress in the past year.

SOURCE: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

13%

Children ages 9-17 who experience some kind of anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental, emotional, and behavioral problems to occur during childhood and adolescence.

SOURCE: National Mental Health Information Center, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

URGING YOU TO BE **Well Aware**

A message from Wayne “Bardy” Bardin, Sublette County Sheriff

The way I grew up was fast and furious. You live hard and die young. It’s ingrained in us from early on. But now, at age 55, I’m thinking how am



I going to live when my only son died by suicide?

Since Garrett passed in 2008, I’ve talked to several people on this subject: when you raise kids that both are zero trouble, you tend to take for granted that everything is okay in their lives. That you’ve provided what they need to be successful in life.

But I’d like to put this across to parents—their kids’ raising can’t be taken for granted. You might have to dig deeper. Parents need to sit down at supptime with their kids and talk. Maybe you establish contact with their friends, and poll those individuals once in awhile to find out what is going on with your kids. But Garrett’s friends say they would never have talked to me or my wife.

I’ve been around suicide since I’ve been in this business, since 1992. But the issue of my boy committing suicide? It just wasn’t there. I was the last to see Garrett alive. He was distraught, but we talked, and when we parted at 12:30 a.m. on June 21, 2008, I told him I loved him and he said, “I love you, Dad.” He never told me what was really in his mind. Maybe that was his way of saying everything is going to be alright. (cont’d on p. 3) →



Little Cowboy—Like his father, Garrett Bardin was raised with the Wyoming self-reliant attitude to “Cowboy Up” when faced with adversity. Garrett died by suicide at age 23 in 2008.

Learning from experience to help others at risk

1997 with sister Taylor

with Mom Carole, 1987

Balloon release at Walk on June 19th in Pinedale

Taylor walks in memory of Garrett on June 19th

Mom Carole (center) with loss survivors Susan Juvellier and BJ Ayers

Taylor and baby brother, 1984

When Pinedale resident Carole Richie, mother of Garrett Bardin (see cover story and above), established Garrett’s Palms, a non-profit foundation in her son’s memory, her goal was to raise awareness of suicide as preventable. One year later—and with two community awareness walks under her belt—Carole has new understanding of her son’s death. “It hit me hard,” says Carole after learning about the symptoms of anxiety disorders in youths. Carole saw perfectionism in her only son, and an unwillingness to disappoint others. “He was an overachiever. There was a stress he put on himself trying to do everything perfect,” Carole recalls of Garrett. “But I didn’t see it as anxiety. I saw it as ambition.” Today, two years after Garrett’s death by suicide at age 23, Carole wonders if her son’s anxiety disorder, first diagnosed the year he died, was present when he was a child. For more on childhood anxiety disorders, see story at right.



No one in Wyoming is immune to knowledge is power

Just like most Wyoming residents, Garrett Bardin’s parents never considered their only son could die by suicide. “This does happen. It’s a real possibility in all families. Whoever you are, you are not exempt,” says Susan Juvellier of Jackson, who lost her husband to suicide in 1997. “I didn’t believe could happen to me. Nobody believes this, and therefore, they don’t learn how to talk to people who might be suicidal. Suicide has little to do with family values, and more to do with overwhelming emotional pain.”



Susan Juvellier of Jackson

Susan’s recommendation to all Wyoming residents? “Families need to learn how to respond effectively to the emotional pain of their loved ones. Suicidal people want relief from their suffering more than wanting death per se. The suicidal person needs someone with a beating heart, with emotional intelligence and caring. You can feel it when someone actually cares,” she says. Susan admits it can be uncomfortable to be around someone who may express thoughts of killing themselves. The key? Knowing what to say and do to help the at-risk person forward.

WHAT TO SAY OR DO? CHECK OUT <http://www.mhasp.org/coping/resources/faq.html>

“... Maybe the “Cowboy Up” attitude **HASN'T SERVED EITHER OF US WELL.** Maybe that tough exterior ... can be **DEADLY ...**” — SHERIFF BARDY BARDIN

Three days later, we reported Garrett missing in the Bridger Wilderness Area. I've been on all kinds of searches for people over the years, so I stayed clear of the official search for my son because sometimes family can interfere. They were telling me that Garrett would come out when he was ready, to leave him alone. But finally I had to do something. I went in on an early morning, up the trailhead, zigzagging 8 or 9 miles. I spent two nights in there, and after that I knew he wasn't alive. It was a premonition. And I was right. On July 3, Garrett was discovered near the Big Sandy River.

Now it's two years later, and I've found that the hurt never goes away. The second-guessing never goes away. The hole is there forever. If there were signs, Garrett just didn't exhibit those to me. But maybe his mom and I didn't know what to look for.

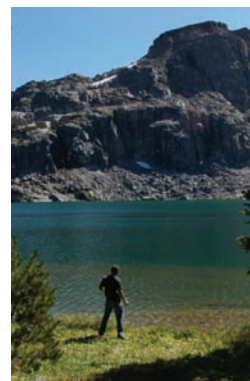
To this day, I believe we were two of the best parents anyone ever had. But what I can't get away from is the shame and the guilt that shows up afterward, and gets so strong.

I grew up on a ranch, in agriculture. And I learned early on that cowboys are tough. My son didn't have an actual diagnosis of anxiety disorder or depression, but he still might have had these illnesses that can be life-threatening.

Maybe the “Cowboy Up” attitude hasn't served either of us well. Maybe that tough exterior, the sense that we can—and should—handle anything by ourselves, can be deadly.

The biggest deterrents to risky behaviors start at home. I wish I knew more about what Garrett was going through. Many suicides are preventable. Let's work together as Wyoming citizens to make sure that our state is safer from suicide, and our sons and daughters are safe from themselves.

Wayne “Bardy” Bardin



anxiety



common and treatable in children

SOURCE: AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY (www.aacap.org)

- ▶ Many worries about things before they actually happen
- ▶ Constant worries or concerns about family, school, friends, or activities
- ▶ Repetitive, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) or actions (compulsions)
- ▶ Fears of embarrassment or making mistakes
- ▶ Low self esteem and lack of self-confidence

Early treatment of severe anxiety in children can prevent future difficulties, such as loss of friendships, failure to reach social and academic potential, and feelings of low self-esteem. If left untreated, anxiety disorders can lead to depression, which can predispose someone to suicidal thoughts, gestures and attempts.



COPING CAT for anxious kids

COPING CAT is an evidence-based cognitive behavioral treatment that assists school-age children in: (1) recognizing anxious feelings and physical reactions to anxiety; (2) clarifying cognition in anxiety-provoking situations (i.e., unrealistic expectations); (3) developing a plan to help cope with the situation (i.e., determining what coping actions might be effective); and (4) evaluating performance and administering self-reinforcement as appropriate. For school or outpatient settings, **COPING CAT** has been implemented in Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States. From Workbook Publishing Inc. at <http://workbookpublishing.com>.

LOOKING FOR MORE EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS FOR ANXIETY, DEPRESSION AND SUICIDALITY IN YOUTHS? CHECK OUT THE **NATIONAL REGISTRY OF EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES (NREPP)**, A NATIONAL DATABASE OF NOTEWORTHY PROGRAMS THAT HAVE DEMONSTRATED POSITIVE OUTCOMES. VISIT NREPP ONLINE AT WWW.NREPP/SAMHSA.GOV.

GRABBING THE REINS to stay upright

Just as reins direct a horse, signaling a turn or slowing speed, proverbial reins in a child's life can give subtle commands or clues to help guide a youth down a path to success. These reins in a child's life can be **PARENT, TEACHER, COUNSELOR, PEER, SIBLING, COACH, FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND.** Together, they can help keep at-risk youths safe from suicide.

Instead of a bucking bronco, youths at this year's Wyoming State Fair rode a Bucking Raging Rooster to show their staying power. This fun activity from the Wyoming Department of Health is aimed at drawing youths' attention to suicide as both preventable and treatable. For more fun photos, visit www.amillionmilesfromanywhere.com.



Well Aware

A Suicide Prevention Policy Bulletin for WYOMING EDUCATION LEADERS

- School Board Members ■ Superintendents
- Principals ■ Student Services Directors ■ Central Office Administration ■ Deans of Students

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Be well aware [resources and help]

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR AMERICAN INDIANS



Check out a new public service advertising (PSA) campaign to promote recovery from mental health problems within the American Indian community by educating and inspiring young adults to talk openly about issues of mental health. Visit the website at <http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/native/>

MILLION MILES FROM ANYWHERE

If you haven't visited the Wyoming youth-centric website for suicide prevention, check out www.amillionmilesfromanywhere.com for contests, resources, videos, prevention news and more.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE COMING

Mark your calendars for Sept. 27-28 for the the AdvancED Wyoming NCA Fall School Improvement Conference in Cheyenne at Little America Hotel and Resort. This intensive two-day event brings together educators from throughout Wyoming. Among this year's keynote speakers is Dr. Jay Smink, Executive Director, National Dropout Prevention Center. Early registration ends Sept. 20. For more, visit www.advanc-ed.org or contact Karan Wright at 970-372-3010 or kwright@ncacasi.org.

Well Aware

FREE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY
Upcoming webinar series focuses on youth suicide prevention, features national experts

SCHOOLS AND SUICIDE: Latest and Best School-Based Strategies	THOSE LEFT BEHIND: Helping Students Who Have Lost a Peer to Suicide	CRISIS RESPONSE: When a Student Dies by Suicide
WED. SEPTEMBER 29th, 2010 TIME: 3:30-4:30 p.m. Eastern WITH MADELYN GOULD, Ph.D., M.P.H.	TUE., OCTOBER 12th, 2010 TIME: 3:30-4:30 p.m. Eastern WITH DAVID BRENT, M.D.	WED., NOVEMBER 3rd, 2010 TIME: 3:30-4:30 p.m. Eastern WITH SCOTT POLAND, Psy.D.

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