Change Direction Jam

Event Summary and Actions Recommended by Jam Participants
“If your loved one could talk to you one last time from the grave, they may tell you something like this:

‘I didn’t do this to hurt you. I never wanted to do anything that would hurt you. I was feeling so much pain. There was nothing you could have done differently to help me or to keep me alive. There was nothing you did that made me do this. The pain I felt ran so deep inside of me—through my bones, my veins, my skin, through every fiber of my being....’

-- Change Direction Jam Participant
THE CHANGE DIRECTION JAM

In 2015 Give an Hour® launched its very successful Campaign to Change Direction®, a public health initiative with mental health messaging featuring the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering© and Healthy Habits of Emotional Well-being©. To complement the Campaign, for 32 hours between October 10-11, 2019, Give an Hour (GAH) partnered with IBM to host the Change Direction Jam: A Global Conversation on Mental Health Culture Change. Using IBM’s award-winning Innovation Jam™ solution for large-scale online collaboration and data-driven outcomes, the Jam created an opportunity for thought leaders, change agents, advocates and policy makers – including those with lived experiences – to share ideas about how best to address mental health issues and challenges, including trauma, suicide, and substance abuse.

Online conversations took place under the umbrella of five topics – Education & Suicide Prevention, Culture & Access Barriers, Trauma, Work Environment and Policy – designed to engage and encourage participants to think differently about how we respond to and treat mental illness, and about how we encourage well-being.

More than 2,250 individuals registered for the event: Almost 1,000 participants representing all 50 states (including Puerto Rico) and Mexico, Canada and Australia, engaged in 280 conversations (threads) generating 2,000 comments. Posters were able to optionally categorize (e.g., tag) their thoughts and ideas along eight content categories: Corporate, Faith-based, Healthcare & Service Delivery, LGBTQ, Military & Veteran, Policy, Sports & Entertainment, and Youth.

The Jam benefited from significant engagement by an impressive list of 45 VIP Guests – producers of television and theater, Chief Executive and Medical Officers from multiple corporations, leadership from the Department of Veteran Affairs, musical artists, actors, mental health professionals, and advocates. VIPs joined specific topics to start conversations, lend their subject matter expertise – and share real-life experiences to help bring the topics to life.

Eight “Jam Hosts” from Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Aetna, PsychArmor, National Guard Bureau, Duke University and DCP Entertainment set the stage for the five umbrella topics. Hosts were aided by 20 facilitators from Give an Hour, Aetna and IBM who helped drive participation and encourage deeper thinking. Facilitators were also tasked with periodically identifying and highlighting “emerging” and “best” ideas to direct greater attention to specific conversations and to refine ideas at given points in time.

Give an Hour is proud of our efforts to change mental health, and we are excited to share these conversations with our partners and supporters. They will guide our next steps together to change the culture of mental health.
The Change Direction Jam was unlike any other Innovation Jam™ engagement executed by the IBM Jam Program Office. A first-of-a-kind, online discussion on mental health culture change, the Jam harnessed crowdsourced energy and “soul.” Posters were driven by lived experiences, and the objectives to remove barriers surrounding mental health and to advance real change. The volume and detail of personal stories was unprecedented. The issues, challenges and solutions discussed impact not only the individual – and groups of individuals – but also ricochet across an entire ecosystem of family, friends, community, business, and government. In a time when social media is often pointed out as having a negative impact, the Jam proved that technology can serve as a catalyst for important, sensitive discussion and to bring people together who otherwise could never meet—especially those suffering from traumatic events in search of a voice.

Below are the seven overall key themes and recommendations identified from the longest conversations, highest rated comments, most watched content (e.g., bookmarked) – as well as IBM’s automated text analysis. (The following pages describe the top themes and recommendations in each of the five umbrella topic areas.)

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<td>1. The (Social) Media (i.e., How to responsibly represent mental health issues, protect free speech, and protect vulnerable consumers)</td>
<td>Bolster mental health awareness education in schools. Parental involvement, attention to bad content reviews (e.g., Common Sense Media), poor sales, and public conversation are good checks to identify and avoid badly written or poorly researched work. Talk through the use of trigger warnings (e.g., Netflix’s “13 Reasons Why”) before introducing stories involving complex mental health issues (e.g., HBO displays “bumpers” with resource information before certain mental health-related episodes).</td>
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<td>2. Veteran transition &amp; suicide prevention</td>
<td>A Joint Action Plan by Defense, Homeland Security and VA is needed to provide transitioning service members and vets with mental health and suicide prevention services. Teach benefits and start enrollment before discharge, facilitating connection with VAMC right away, including online resources. Conduct a detailed review of where people have slipped through cracks.</td>
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<td>3. Community events and festivals/partnerships</td>
<td>Conduct events / arrange partnerships that increase awareness and facilitate intervention. Example: A Mix Media Solutions class at USC’s Thornton School of Music partnered with Kevin Lyman, founder of Vans Warped Tour, to produce a first-of-a-kind event, “The 320 Festival.” Over 40 nonprofits will participate in an outdoor festival, mental health summit, and benefit concert in May 2020.</td>
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<td>4. The legislative process &amp; funding: Federal v state issues</td>
<td>Multiple actions including: Assess the mental health of persons entering the criminal justice system. Create the 988 suicide hotline. Confront state governments attempting to change scope and requirements for practice and to change the titles of providers. Confront health insurance companies where mental health is not covered like physical health.</td>
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<td>5. Opioid use, misuse, and addiction</td>
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<td>6. Using lived experience to help others</td>
<td>Encourage those who have personal experience with mental health to listen to and refer others for help. Quotes from the Jam include: “As survivors, we have been given the gift of empathy and now we can use what seemed to be the worst in our lives to help others foster understanding and healing and overcome stigma.” “For me, it all began with the simple act of opening myself up to ask another human being for help beginning this process of change and healing that has led me to help others through my work.”</td>
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<td>7. Mental health best practices in the workplace</td>
<td>There are nine recommended actions from the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention (workplacesuicideprevention.com). Employees need education on the importance of managing their mental health and fitness, emphasizing proactive preventative action. Employers should offer easy access to employee assistance programs (EAP) and qualified mental health professionals for those that need them. Reduce the stigma and reluctance to ask for help, including Diversity &amp; Inclusion issues (e.g., LGBTQ specific needs).</td>
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1. Education and Suicide Prevention

Conversations were raw and urgent, evoking empathy from the reader. While “Education and Suicide Prevention” saw the most active participation in the Jam overall, various single, one-off posts had just as much impact; the candid and often painful stories of survival and loss reinforced the suffering of the individual and critical importance of the subject matter.

The top idea/recommendation in this topic – and the highest rated (“liked”) across the Jam – touched on ways to better help transitioning service members and veterans more quickly find relevant information about VHA mental health resources, including online sites. One recommendation is to conduct a comprehensive study of those service members who have “slipped through the cracks.” Conversation also surrounded the idea of a new joint action plan by Defense, Homeland Security, and the VA to provide transitioning service members and vets with mental health and suicide prevention services through better and more aggressive education. Starting the re-entry education enrollment process before discharge was cited as positive change.

The longest conversation across the Jam appeared in this topic. The thread “Breaking down social barriers about mental health through community events,” led by VIP Talinda Bennington, co-producer of a first of its kind mental health community event called “The 320 Festival,” was the third highest rated conversation in the Jam overall.

Talinda joined the Jam while a guest lecturer at the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music. Her class focused on producing live events and embedding philanthropic thought. Talinda – with the help of students in a Mix Media Solutions class – discussed the importance of the 320 Festival and its goal of bringing mental health organizations, non-profits, and musicians together to generate awareness of suicide and to educate today’s youth on the importance of community involvement. (Applying music and art programs is a prominent theme in several other topics.) “Celebrities” like Talinda, who found “life and love” – and purpose – after her husband’s suicide, show sufferers that a catastrophic event can result in good.

The top three ideas/recommendations in this topic are summarized below.

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<th>Theme</th>
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<td>Veteran Transition &amp; Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>A Joint Action Plan by Defense, Homeland Security, and VA is needed to provide transitioning service members and vets with mental health and suicide prevention services. Teach benefits and start enrollment before discharge, facilitating connection with VAMC right away, including online resources. Conduct a detailed review of where people have slipped through cracks.</td>
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<td>Community Events and Festivals / Partnerships</td>
<td>Conduct events / arrange partnerships that increase awareness and facilitate intervention. Example: A Mix Media Solutions class at USC’s Thornton School of Music partnered with Kevin Lyman, founder of Vans Warped Tour, to produce a FOAK event, “The 320 Festival.” Over 40 nonprofits will participate in an outdoor festival, mental health summit, and benefit concert in May 2020.</td>
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<td>Impact of De-sensitization</td>
<td>Fight the “normalization” of traumatic events. Research the effects of virtual, fantasy, onscreen violence. Recruit and promote the work of producers and directors who address these issues (e.g., producer DJ Nash: “I created ‘a million little things’ to make suicide and depression part of a TV show, and part of our national conversation”).</td>
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Q: How can we work together to adopt models and programs that focus on education, early identification, and suicide prevention – and reach more people with information that will drive mental health culture change and ensure those in need get the help they deserve?

90 conversations/threads
665 comments/replies
2. Culture and Access Barriers

The second most popular topic based on number of comments, “Culture and Access Barriers” explored progress being made to advance access to mental health. While much progress has been made, “silence” continues to be a primary barrier; giving voice to sufferers – as well as elevating mental health and emotional wellbeing into the national consciousness and discussion – were prominent themes.

Creation of a national program – “It’s ok to say” – showcasing personal testimonies and celebrity accounts was frequently cited as an effective way to help break down the wall of silence and weakness associated with mental health struggles, as was the Campaign to Change Direction. Encouraging those who have sought help to share their experiences – good and bad – in public forums (e.g., the Jam) and in high-risk populations (e.g., schools) would go a long way in generating greater awareness. For example: celebrities such as VIP DJ Nash can provide first-hand accounts of their own lived experiences (e.g., Nash stated that his show, “A Million Little Things,” was created as a result of a friend’s suicide, and that Nash intended to make suicide and depression part of a shared national discourse).

Much conversation focused on how to responsibly portray and address the treatment of mental health in the media. Movies such as “Silver Linings Playbook” illustrate the “everyman” aspect of mental health struggle and help remove stigma. Discussion was focused on ways in which social media can be used for good, such as connecting individuals through online support groups and therapists. Recommendations also focused on the transformative power of music and art as therapy and self-expression; it not only offers a powerful release valve for the individual creating it, but also conveys a personal journey and struggle to others.

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<td>Break the Negativity Narrative (”It’s Okay to Say” Program)</td>
<td>Have leaders and influencers speak out in public forums (like this Jam). Engage influencers in at-risk populations; encourage those who have received help to talk about their experiences. Study communities of color, LGBTQ groups, and places that face economic adversity, where there are no/little services, or the stigma and pressure to adhere to dominant societal narratives make disconnection more likely.</td>
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<td>The (Social) Media (i.e., How to responsibly represent mental health issues, protect free speech and protect vulnerable consumers)</td>
<td>Bolster mental health awareness education in schools. Parental involvement, attention to bad content reviews (e.g., Common Sense Media), poor sales, and public conversation are good checks to identify and avoid badly written or poorly researched work. Talk through the use of trigger warnings before introducing stories involving complex mental health issues (e.g., HBO displays “bumpers” with resource information before certain mental health-related episodes).</td>
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<td>Art and Music as Release</td>
<td>Promote creative work products: For example: “In my music video ‘King Leisure – Real Texas,’ I tried to show the ‘Five Signs’ in a new visual way. Moods, projections, and inner turmoil is shown, externalized on the main character’s body using green screen technology. We see the character’s feelings, body language, and inner struggle.” (Post from David Poznansky referring to his video released with UMTTR, a partner of Change Direction.)</td>
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3. Trauma

The topic reinforced the catastrophic effect trauma has not only on individuals, but also on their ecosystem of family, friends, loved ones, employers and community. Unaddressed trauma can have deadly consequences – including suicide and other acts of violence. Sexual abuse, divorce, ending a long-term relationship, violent crime, returning from war – these events must be acknowledged and carefully considered in order to help affected individuals. Recognizing trauma is key.

The longest and highest rated conversation in the topic focused on how those with lived experiences are uniquely able to help those suffering from trauma. A sample post: “As survivors, we have been given the gift of empathy and now we can use what seemed to be the worst in our lives to help others foster understanding and healing and overcoming stigma.” By sharing their personal journey of recovery, survivors can illustrate the need for less “one-size-fits all” treatment. Stories of inspiration and tragedy help reinforce the need for more research to better define – and recognize – trauma in all its forms, especially PTSD.

Participants also recognized the need to address trauma faster in crisis situations; free educational materials could help the public administer care in situations requiring immediate de-escalation.

As in other topics, music and the arts were cited to help those suffering from traumatic events. “Finding a voice” through songwriting and performance can help express and purge negative feeling. For example, encourage songwriters and artists to visit prisons and counseling programs to teach how to write and perform as a coping mechanism.

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<td>Using Lived Experience to Help Others</td>
<td>Encourage those who have personal experience with mental health to listen to and refer others for help. Quotes from the Jam include: “As survivors, we have been given the gift of empathy and now we can use what seemed to be the worst in our lives to help others foster understanding and healing and overcome stigma.” “For me, it all began with the simple act of opening myself up to ask another human being for help beginning this process of change and healing that has led me to help others through my work.”</td>
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<td>Sexual Abuse (female, male, trans, etc.; different and same sex)</td>
<td>Promote support groups for survivors of sexual abuse, who often understand this issue as well as, if not better than, anyone else. Reduce reliance on Rxing too many meds. Encourage people to open up and speak and thereby work on reducing stigma. Useful phrases: “It’s ok. I believe you. You are not alone in the battle. Take care of yourself. Try to learn to love again. You are not weak.”</td>
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<td>Divorce and Relationship Strains Post Trauma; Suicide Risks</td>
<td>Returning vets need a formal program that addresses the psychosocial issues associated with return to civilian life, partners, and families. Spouses, family and caregivers need education and resources to enable them to support a person re-entering society. Caregivers may experience vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue (cf. need for “Healthy Habits of Emotional Well-being”). Training may require deep “lived experience” simulation.</td>
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Q: What are the barriers that prevent effective responses and care for those experiencing trauma and what programs and efforts are working well?

54 conversations/threads
344 comments/replies
4. Work Environment

Fact: Average Americans spend 2K hours/year at work; it is important that they are happy and healthy while there. Mental illness and substance abuse annually impact employers $80-$100B in indirect costs; workers with substance use disorders lose 50% more workdays than peers. Corporate focus on mental and emotional health can improve productivity, reduce health care costs, increase morale, and improve retention.

This topic explored unaddressed mental health challenges and substance use disorders in the workplace and ways in which companies can better support policies and practices that promote emotional health and wellbeing.

The most active conversation in “Work Environment” (and the fourth most active overall) was authored by Hyong Un, Chief Psychiatric Officer for Aetna Behavioral Health and Head of the Aetna Employee Assistance Program. Dr. Un asked participants to share their stories about how companies support business leaders in creating a happier and more productive work environment. The conversation netted several best practices: educating employees on the importance of managing their mental health and fitness; easier access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) – along with more qualified mental health professionals; and greater emphasis on the importance of seeking help. Participants noted that this is especially important with Millennials and Gen Z who are more prone to leave jobs for mental health reasons.

Conversation also focused on ways in which technology can assist employees, by offering applications for self-screening; and providing programs – and training – to encourage self-help (e.g., brain training, breathing exercises, meditation, mindfulness, mind set). Participants suggested that stress management (and recognizing triggers) should be a required part of annual HR workforce training. Listening for the “Five Signs of Emotional Suffering” was discussed as a way for employees to recognize colleagues’ emotional pain.

How to deal with family emergencies and crisis was a top theme, with discussion on recognizing the multiple definitions of “family” and “relationships” as part of society’s ongoing multicultural evolution. To that end, how to care for family members suffering from emotional pain, as well as how to care for caregivers who live with the stress of these situations, is a real concern.

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<td>Mental Health Best Practices in the Workplace</td>
<td>There are nine recommended actions from the National Guidelines for Workplace Suicide Prevention (workplacesuicideprevention.com). Employees need education on the importance of managing their mental health and fitness, emphasizing proactive preventative action. Employers should offer easy access to employee assistance programs (EAP) and qualified mental health professionals for those that need them. Reduce the stigma and reluctance to ask for help, including Diversity &amp; Inclusion issues (e.g., LGBTQ specific needs).</td>
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<td>Stress and Burn Out Among Mental Health Providers</td>
<td>View self-care as a professional core competency. Providing professionals with a method of care - that is supportive without risking reputation or stigma -- is a key factor in decreasing burn out.</td>
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<td>Technology Tools for Mental Health</td>
<td>Offer tools and resources that assess mental health and fitness and screen for specific conditions. Encourage employees to help themselves (brain training, breathing, meditation, mindfulness) by hosting training sessions and recommending apps. Large scale example: GRIT digital platform to facilitate emotional wellbeing and resiliency for vets &amp; military personnel.</td>
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5. Policy

Participants brainstormed the role leadership plays in building consensus, along with the elements necessary to do so. Even though the Policy topic lagged the other four in terms of conversations and comments—perhaps due to the complex subject matter and relatively less VIP engagement—several themes emerged.

The legislative process/funding was the most “liked” overall theme. This is a varied and complicated area that despite talk fails to draw the attention of policymakers and legislators who need to act and make laws, especially those that contribute to mental parity and wellbeing. There has been talk about behavioral health equity for decades, but other than a handful of states (CA, MA), most have made negligible advancements in policies to address it.

LGBTQ Activism Models are cited in this topic as means to garner public and legislative attention. Although not monolithic, the LGBTQ “community” is often stigmatized, ostracized, and marginalized—but they are nonetheless outspoken and effective activists in their communications. They have navigated the difficult task of turning issues—HIV/AIDS in particular—which affect a relatively small percentage into national talking points.

Opioid use, misuse and addiction was the longest conversation. There are many paths to abuse, with two known typical routes: A Rx given for opioids after surgery. Returning OIF/OEF wounded veterans spending months/years recovering from severe injury, and developing iatrogenic addiction to opioids per long-term, high-dose therapy.

As in the other Jam topics, education is prominently discussed in various ways to address Policy. Some decision makers believe that if you talk about suicide you will provide an avenue to it. Thus, there is fear of liability to allow education programs in schools. Yet, talking about suicide is the best way of prevention. Fear must be removed either through education of leaders, legal action, or congressional action. Education in the workplace and the bolstering of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) needs to be encouraged to adopt policies that are supportive of employees' mental wellbeing while addressing concerns about productivity, attendance, etc.

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<td>The LGBTQ Activism Model</td>
<td>Groups that have some of the highest rates of trauma, abuse, and suicide (e.g., vets and trans) are more isolated, less cohesive, and less open. They need an organized sense of community (including Allies), as a protective factor on its own, for outgroup support, and for legislative / policy activism.</td>
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Jam Hosts

Erin Brzezinski
Clinical Manager
PsychArmor

Chris Colbert
Founder and CEO
DCP Entertainment

Mark Friedlander
Chief Medical Officer
Aetna Behavioral Health

Matt Kleiman
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Harold Kudler
Adjunct Associate Professor
Duke University

Phil Ritter
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Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

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Executive Vice President for Program Implementation
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

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Aetna
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- Jennifer Jones
- Aimee Prange
- Jenny Solari

Give an Hour

- Soma Arsenault
- Angie Bates
- Lisa Calixto
- Katie Civiletto
- Kristin Richardson
- Tessa Glenn
- Jessica Grove
- Nina Ravick
- David Pearl-Schwartz
- Kirsti Thompson
- Erin Timmermans
- Marissa Tisch
- Jamie Turner

IBM

- Leah Dienger
- Jonathan Gelfand
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