

Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

Abstract

Public posters to combat suicide in Hong Kong.

Artist

Amy Shi (2019)

Caption

In Hong Kong, there were a total of 853 suicide deaths in 2017— approximately 11.5 suicides per 100,000. While people over age 65 constitute the highest-affected age group (24.3 deaths per 100,000), the increasing trend of student suicides is also worrying and highlights a nation’s failing system of social support for vulnerable populations. Across all age groups, jumping accounts for about half of all suicide deaths.

Artist Lens

Short poems were composed through gathering news articles from various sources like the South China Morning Post, a popular Hong Kong newspaper, which openly features stories about suicide and mental health. Each poem aims to reflect feelings from a distinct viewpoint, in hopes that their messages can resonate with some readers or provoke reflection.

This product seeks an eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart experience when commuters read about how their fellow Hong Kongers respond to suicide and mental health issues. Seeing these messages in public spaces may allow citizens to become more comfortable about bringing up suicide and mental health in other conversations.

“I’m listening” reflects the thoughts of a high school student who feels uncertain about how to act when a friend shares that he had thoughts about suicide before. In addition to influences from newspaper interviews, this composition also draws from more personal experiences of knowing someone who has considered committing suicide. “I’m looking” comes from the perspective of an elderly man who is yearning to find new purpose and joy in life after retirement and the death of close family and friends. Family members are urged to recognize the depression is not a normal part of aging and to support them through quality time and/or seeking professional resources. “I’m living” shares the real story of a Hong Kong University law student who has overcome a difficult period of depression, coupled with suicidal thoughts. In interviews with the South China Morning Post, he reveals his sentiments during that time and how professional psychiatric services helped him recover.

[Watch Amy Shi Reflection](#)

Media

Digital

FORM 6 STUDENT, 16

I'm listening
I had not known him for long, but
There was kindness in his eyes
And he saw trust in mine.
So he told me.

And I just listened. I listened.
I'd like to think that it didn't change the way I saw him,
But it did. And perhaps it should.
I wanted to be more sensitive with my words.
I wanted to understand his feelings.
I wanted to give him support.

But mostly, I didn't know what I could do,
Didn't know what I could offer,
So I just stayed by his side and
Listened.
He says he's fine For Now
I'll keep listening.

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Lately, I feel like
my purpose has been misplaced.
It's a tangible emptiness.
Like my glasses, they're around
Somewhere.
But like my glasses, I feel blind,
Directionless without them.

Retired, widowed, a burden to others.
Why bother holding on?
Because there are times of clarity:
fresh morning air,
a lucky mahjong hand,
my laughing granddaughter.

So between these fleeting moments,
supported by family,
I'm looking for new purpose.

I'm looking
POK FU LAM RESIDENT, 73

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HKU LAW STUDENT, 23

I'm living
For the longest time, I hid, I hid,
thinking that the
safety of my dorm rooms would shield me
from the crushing stress.

I didn't dare go to school,
Couldn't bare to see my friends,
Wouldn't care if, at that moment,
Everything just
stopped.

Get a grip!
You need to finish that project,
write that report.
What I really needed was
Help.

I have Depression.
But family and friends kept supporting me,
bringing me to see doctors, counsellors.
I was lucky to find help then, and now,
I'm living because of it.
"It's OK to seek help"

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I'm listening

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And he saw trust in mine.
So he told me.

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But it did. And perhaps it should.

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