

## Stand-up comedy course for men at risk of suicide

### Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

a. These abbreviations are in the text. What are the missing words? How do you pronounce these abbreviations?

1. NHS      National H\_a\_t\_ Service
2. PTSD      Post-Traumatic \_t\_e\_s Disorder
3. ADHD      Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity \_i\_o\_d\_r

#### 2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

anxiety

depression

disorder

postnatal

vulnerable

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ person is weak and easy to hurt physically or mentally.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the period of time after you have given birth to a baby.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a feeling of being extremely unhappy.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a worried feeling you have because you think something bad might happen.
5. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a type of a medical condition.

experience

participant

risk

suicide

trauma

6. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a bad experience that makes you feel very upset, afraid or shocked, often for a very long time.
7. A \_\_\_\_\_ is the possibility that something bad or dangerous might happen.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the action of killing yourself.
9. An \_\_\_\_\_ is something that happens to you.
10. A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone who takes part in something.

## Stand-up comedy course for men at risk of suicide wins NHS funding

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**Amelia Hill**

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- 1 Stand-up comedy is one of the most difficult jobs in the world. Many people say they would be too afraid to do it. But now there is a course that is helping the most vulnerable people in the country by teaching them to be comedians. It is very successful.
- 2 "I've taught comedy for ten years, and students often said they were stronger and happier after using stand-up comedy," said Angie Belcher, who started Comedy on Referral in Bristol.
- 3 "The models, exercises and games we use in a stand-up comedy course can help people to recover from emotional problems such as mental illness, postnatal depression, PTSD and anxiety disorders," she said.
- 4 After completing a very successful six-week course for trauma survivors in Bristol, Comedy on Referral has now received funding from the NHS to help men at risk of suicide in London. Belcher is also hoping to extend the course to young people with autism and ADHD.
- 5 "My course enables people to use comedy to change their feelings about their experiences. It also puts them in a powerful position because being on stage is very powerful," she said. "You can speak directly to an audience about important things, which means you can change their lives. As a comedian, you could be the reason why someone in your audience does something differently."
- 6 The course takes participants through the writing, performance and analysis of their personal stories to create a five-minute stand-up comedy set using games and both group and one-to-one work.
- 7 Recently, Belcher received some money from a large health organization to help to reduce suicides by 10%. Belcher will work with psychologists and men who have experienced suicidal events to help up to 20 men aged 18 and over to take part in a comedy event at the end of the course for an audience of at least 100 people.
- 8 "We've never done anything like this before and we're very excited about it. We hope the course will reach men who are at high risk of suicide but don't think they have a problem'," said Lourdes Colclough, Head of Suicide Prevention at Rethink Mental Illness. "This is a different way of helping this group of people, who normally don't accept help."

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What is one of the most difficult jobs in the world?
2. How long has Angie Belcher taught comedy?
3. How did students often feel after using stand-up comedy?
4. What four 'emotional problems' does the article mention?
5. How long was the course for trauma survivors?
6. Where was it?
7. Where will the course for men at risk of suicide be?
8. How long will each stand-up comedy set be?
9. How old will the participants be?
10. How many people will be in the audience?

### 4 Key language

a. Complete the table using words from the text.

noun	adjective
1. emotion	_____
2. power	_____
3. suicide	_____
verb	noun
4. survive	_____ (person)
5. prevent	_____
6. perform	_____

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### 5 Discussion

- a. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?
- “Comedy and laughter are good for everyone.”

### 6 In your own words

- a. Think of a famous comedian from your country (dead or alive). Open an internet search engine and find out as much as you can about their life and their career. In particular, find out why they are (or were) so funny. Make notes and report your findings to the class.