

For Embrace, 2016 is our third year in action. We have done a lot since our inception, but 2016 has started off with major achievements, new faces, and in the spirit of growth and prosperity.

## MENTAL HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

### The First Study on Stigma in Lebanon

The Department of Psychiatry at AUBMC conducted the first large-scale survey of mental health related stigma and knowledge among adults in Lebanon. Most people suffering from mental illness do not obtain treatment. The study employed a cross-sectional research design, using quantitative and qualitative methods, to assess knowledge, stigma, and help-seeking attitudes in a nationally representative sample of Lebanese adults (n=1600) using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). The study found that although Lebanese self-reported adequate knowledge about mental illness, they exhibited a negative attitude towards the mentally ill. Fear of being socially stigmatized was the most identified barrier to seeking professional help. Results also revealed that being more knowledgeable about mental illness and having more positive attitudes towards people with mental illness predicted an increased likelihood of being open to seeking professional help.

**Reference:** Yehia, F., Zeinoun, P., Doumit, M., Ismail, G., Saeed, S. & Nahas, Z. (n.d.) Mental health-related knowledge and attitudes among Lebanese adults: A national phone survey (forthcoming)

### Embrace Lobbies Insurance Companies to Cover Mental Health Treatment

A phone survey conducted by Embrace Fund and the Department of Psychiatry at AUBMC in July 2015 with all insurance companies registered with the Lebanese Association for Insurance Companies (ACAL) (n=53) revealed that 14 out of the 33 companies that responded to the survey have introduced some form of mental health coverage in their medical policies. This is a major achievement, as two years prior no company in Lebanon was known to cover mental health related conditions in any form. It appears that the majority of these companies are offering mental health coverage in their group policies as an optional benefit to be added when requested by the beneficiary.

Suicide attempts and substance abuse remain excluded from coverage by most companies, even in cases where mental illness is covered by the policy. Embrace Fund and the Department of Psychiatry at AUBMC will continue to advocate and lobby for mental health parity in coverage. These efforts, which are now paying off, started back in April 2013 at the first national roundtable discussion "Parity in Mental Health Financing in Lebanon" that was jointly organized by the Department of Psychiatry at AUBMC, the Lebanese Psychiatric Society (LPS), Lebanese Psychological Association (LPA) and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI).

#### MENTAL HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

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# WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

## Launching of Embrace Website

The second half of 2015 held many significant milestones for Embrace. In September 2015 and in line with the launching of Embrace's annual "Akeed ra7 fee2" campaign, "Embrace Fund" launched its website and the crowdfunding campaign #Embracelife. With the various advanced features, the new website attracted many visitors in addition to new members. In less than six months, Embrace's field officers increased from 13 to 26 individuals, actively involved in Embrace's ongoing activities.

Some of the website's most important features include the educational material presented under "Mental Health Resources". It describes a number of psychiatric and psychological disorders.

Another important feature is "Your Story" portal. "Your Story" encourages individuals to open up and share their experiences with mental illness in an effort to raise awareness about the struggles of individuals who are suffering and comfort those suffering by supporting them so they do not feel they are alone.



### MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Embrace is committed to providing up to date and relevant information about mental health, mental illness and available treatments...[read more](#)



### YOUR STORY

An Initiative to Raise Awareness and Help People Living with Mental Illnesses...[read more](#)



### SUICIDE PREVENTION HELPLINE

Every 40 seconds someone in the world dies from suicide. In Lebanon, every 3 days at least one person dies from suicide...[read more](#)



### BECOME A MEMBER

Embrace members are comprised of patients, parents, siblings, friends, partners, professionals and members of the community...[read more](#)

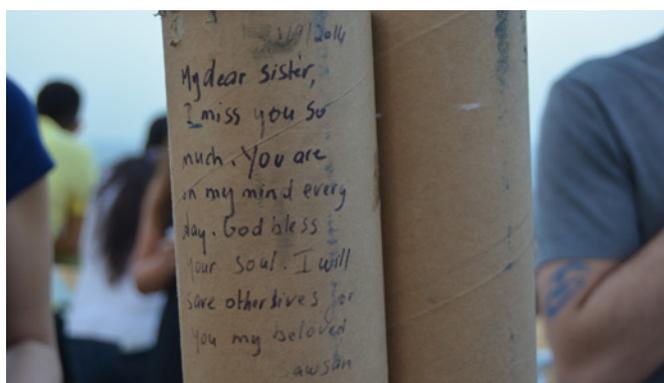
Help us start a Suicide Prevention Helpline for Lebanon

Donate Now

## Second Annual "Into the Dawn" Walk

Under the patronage of the Ministry of Public Health and in the presence of his Excellency Minister Wael Abu Faour, Embrace launched for the second year in a row the "Akeed ra7 fee2 campaign" and "Into the Dawn Suicide Memorial Walk". Into the Dawn is intended to provide a communal support environment for those who have been affected by suicide. The crowd joining the walk exceeded the one from last year, as more individuals are embracing those who experience suicide and are driven to support this cause. More than 200 people woke up at 5 to show their support to this cause. Amongst them were individuals who have themselves suffered mental illness or suicidal thoughts or even attempted suicide in the past, families and friends who have lost someone to suicide, activists and members of the community who are affiliated with this cause, and mental health professionals.

As it began, the walk ended on a note of hope, reflection, recovery, and prevention. Participants made their way to a candle-inspired memorial wall set up in front of the Raouche sea rock. They gathered to place photos or post messages to those they have lost to suicide. Several participants had the courage to speak out about their own struggles with mental illness or their long-lasting longing for those they have lost to suicide in front of the crowd at the Raouche gathering.



## #EmbraceLife Campaign

On September 13, 2015 Embrace and in collaboration with the National Mental Health Program at the Ministry of Public Health launched the first crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for the first National Suicide Prevention Helpline in Lebanon. The goal was to raise \$20,000 to implement Phase 2 of this critical project. And the results were superb!

This helpline will provide Lebanese suffering from various mental illnesses and suicidal ideation with a direct outlet for relief and a referral based system to access urgent needed care. The crowdfunding campaign was launched through the Zommaal platform, and it successfully ended after three months on December 11, 2015. A total of 142 generous contributors donated to this campaign.

#Embracelife not only reached its monetary target but was also able to raise much awareness on the topic of suicide. Here are some of the events that took place over the three month duration of the campaign.



## Updates on the Suicide Prevention Helpline

Since January 2016, Embrace has been collaborating with 180 degrees consulting, a student based consultancy organization who have been working on developing and implementing Phase 2 of the suicide prevention helpline. In March 2016, Embrace will also be recruiting a Project Co-coordinator who will see through the implementation of Phase 2 which includes the following milestones:

1. Designing the business model for the helpline
2. Identifying the human resource needs
3. Contracting with Registered Training Organization
4. Adapting and translating training material to Arabic
5. Developing the Standard Operating Procedures of the helpline
6. Consulting legal team to identify the optimal organizational and legal structure for the helpline and its requirements
7. Detailing a Monitoring and Evaluation plan to be followed throughout the helpline's operation
8. Organizing national conference to discuss the expanded proposal and budget with key stakeholders
9. Setting a fundraising plan to secure funds for the remaining project phases
10. Coordinating with the Ministry of Public Health to finalize the referral and information resources



## Embrace Bake Sale and “Free Hugs” campaign on AUB campus

In November, 2015 Embrace’s field officers and in collaboration with the Psychology Student Society at AUB organized a bake sale on AUB campus to raise funds that would support the #embracelife campaign and contribute to establishing the first Suicide Prevention Helpline. Our officers sole handedly organized the event which raised an amount of \$1000.

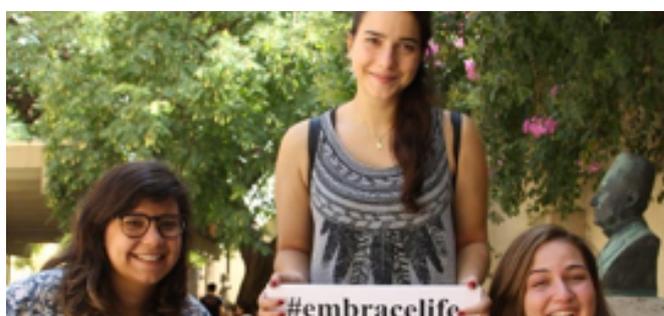
In addition to selling baked goods, our officers also volunteered their time to start a “Free Hugs” campaign on campus. This was a chance to introduce Embrace and its mission of raising awareness about the helpline and encouraging contributions to the #embracelife campaign.



## Personal Initiatives

To further support the #embracelife campaign, our field officers took on personal initiatives to help spread the word. **Loulwa Sweid**, a graduate student at AUB combined her love for photography and for Embrace’s cause by taking portraits of strangers and asking them the following questions “What would you tell a friend who was having a really bad day?” and “Who do you talk to when you’re having a really bad day?” These were posted on social media with a message by Loulwa, “Everyone needs somebody to talk to, and everyone can be that somebody for another person. Support Embrace’s mission to create a 24/7 suicide prevention hotline in Lebanon by donating to their crowdfunding campaign.”

**Tanya Abou Ghazaleh**, invested her talent in film making to support the #embracelife campaign and produce a touching and heartfelt video in which she asked strangers, “Who do you talk to when you’re having a really bad day?” The video entitled “Who do you talk to?” can be viewed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/xqUtEDUwnB0>



### CineClub at AUB raising awareness on suicide

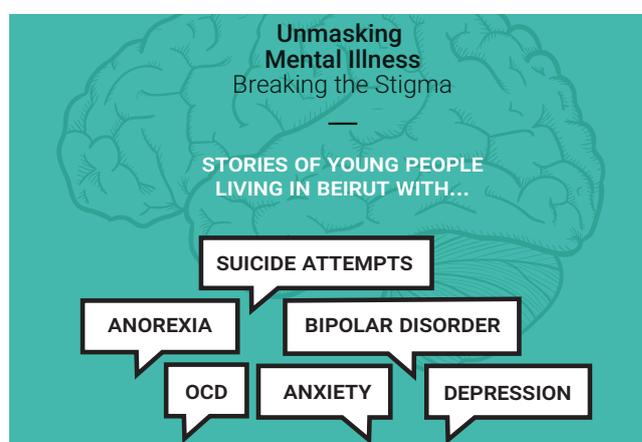
Embrace and in collaboration with the CineClub at AUB and the Psychology Student Society screened a movie raising awareness on the issues of mental health that affect college students and lead them to suicide. This event was the first of its kind in which a movie on this particular topic has been screened. The movie was followed by a Q&A session.

The first CineClub event was also endorsed by the Lebanese actress Cyrine Abdel Nour who presented the event and spoke about the importance of films (and media at large) in raising awareness on issues that affect our community, especially topics that are considered a taboosuch as mental illness and suicide.



### Unmasking Mental Illness

In collaboration with the Psychology Student Society, Embrace organized, during the month of November, the event "Unmasking Mental Illness". Individuals who have personally experienced mental illness unveiled their fear and helped in making the event a great success. The second of its kind, the event has grown to be a yearly platform for individuals who have personally experienced mental illnesses to share their stories and raise awareness about mental illness and its struggles. These testimonials encourage others who feel stigmatized to open up about their illnesses and seek professional help and support from loved ones.



### Avant-Premiere of the Hunger Games

A private screening of the long awaited movie, "The Hunger Games", took place on November 17, 2015 at Beirut Souks Cinema City. The raised proceeds from the screening went to support the #embracelife campaign and the establishment of the National Suicide Prevention Helpline.



### Embrace at Beirut Marathon

For the third year in a row, Embrace joined the Beirut Marathon. This year more than 70 runners endorsed the cause of mental health. Crowne Plaza was the first Lebanese institution to endorse and run for Embrace too. During the event, Jana Aridi and two other runners who preferred to remain anonymous ran the full 42K's.



## Raising Awareness in Schools

Embrace's field officers visited College Protestant School this October to raise awareness about mental illnesses and suicide. This visit was among the first of a series of future planned outreach activities to be conducted in schools across Lebanon.

## Community Outreach Activities

In October 2015, Embrace also began the first of its series of community outreach awareness activities where it presented a general overview of mental illnesses to over 50 employees at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. This activity was the first to directly target individuals from the Lebanese community outside of strictly academic and medical settings.

Another community lecture on the occasion of Movember—Men's health month—was held during the month of November 2015. Embrace visited the headquarters of McDonalds and presented on mental illnesses that affect men and ways of managing these illnesses.

Targeting children and adolescents, Embrace also participated in the annual Mzaar Summer Festival to raise awareness about mental health. The raised proceeds were allocated towards covering psychiatric treatment expenses for individuals with mental illnesses who cannot afford paying for their treatment.



## FIELD OFFICER IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Nour Bou Malham is a computer science major at AUB who recently joined Embrace as a field officer and has helped raise awareness about mental illness through her voluntary hard work on AUB Campus. Nour took part of the “free hugs” campaign and organized the CineClub movie screening at AUB to raise awareness about suicide. She also actively took part in ticket sales for the Avant-premiere event held by Embrace.

**Q: What are your interests?**

**A:** My interests include cinema, music and books!

**Q: Why did you decide to join Embrace?**

**A:** Upon noticing the great need for the Lebanese community to have similar campaigns such as that held by the Embrace Life campaign, I decided to participate in helping spread awareness about such a noble cause. Like many, I was very surprised to discover that we didn't have a suicide prevention hotline in Lebanon (like many others before this campaign I assumed we just had one). The lack of knowledge people have around mental health urged me to join Embrace and actually put more effort into breaking the stigma against mental diseases.

**Q: What do you personally embrace?**

**A:** I personally embrace the concept of embracing everyone for who they are. I have a deep fascination for other people (their lives and stories, and what molds their characters), and that's a key factor in the embrace campaign.

**Q: What is a key message that you would like to spread?**

**A:** I'd like to push everyone to actually ask questions! There's nothing wrong with asking questions and trying to figure things out when it comes to mental health problems. Even when it might seem scary, people should go ahead and ask questions.




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## MEET OUR ADVISORY BOARD

During 2015, Embrace Fund established its official Advisory Board comprised of individuals who bring unique knowledge and skills to support Embrace in fulfilling its mission. They serve as ambassadors for Embrace in the community, help promote its mission and programs, and assist in determining optimal strategies to reach and engage key audiences.

We are proud to announce the first 5 members of our esteemed Advisory Board: Mrs. Bushra Salha, Mrs. Dany Baz, Mrs. Dina Zameli, Mr. Pierre Issa and Mrs. Wafa Saab.

**Mrs. Bushra Salha**

Bushra studied at Beirut College for Women (currently LAU) and graduated with a BA in Political Science/History. She then pursued her studies further at Sotheby's, Christie's, the New Academy for Art Studies and Modern Art Studies, London. In addition to her work as an Art consultant and the curating of two art collections, she trained as a Jungian Psychoanalyst at the British Association of Psychotherapists (currently BPF) London. She currently has her own private practice in Beirut. Besides her involvement with Embrace, Bushra is a member of British Psychotherapy Foundation, member of the International Association for Analytical Psychology, member of the Executive Committee and the Scholarship Fund Committee of the British Lebanese Association. She has also worked as volunteer at various charities in London and Beirut.

**Mrs. Dany Baz**

Dany is General Manager of Bankdata Financial Services, a publishing and consulting company specialized in the Lebanese banking sector since the mid-80s.

Before returning to her company in 2010, Dany held several consecutive jobs at Bank Audi Sal: Head of Marketing and Communications, and Head of Retail Banking for Lebanon and Egypt. Dany holds a B.A. in Marketing from l'Ecole du Marketing et de la Publicité (EMP - Paris) and a Master's in Management and Finance from l'Institut Supérieur des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales (ISSEC - Paris).

**Mrs. Dina Zameli**

Dina began her professional path in Educational Psychology in multidisciplinary centers as well as mainstream educational institutions with a focus on children with special needs and their families. Her field of expertise is behavior modification and child development. After many years in practice, she started her own projects organizing events and workshops for the youth with the main focus on raising awareness about global issues and their impact on the society using the media of art and design. Dina pursued her studies at AUB in General Psychology, Elementary Education and Educational Psychology. She also graduated with a Master's in Business Administration. Today, she is an active member of the AUB Alumni Jeddah Chapter.

**Mr. Pierre Issa**

Pierre Issa has been working in the humanitarian field people since the 1970s. In 1985 and in alignment with the development of many innovative services during the organization's history, he co-founded the NGO Arcenciel. Mr. Pierre served on the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon and participated in the launch of various social enterprises working on access to social and medical services, women and youth empowerment and environment preservation. He is recipient of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, French government (2014), Comendador del Orden Nacional del Merito, King of Spain (2015), and Schwab Social Entrepreneur of the Year (2015) for Arcenciel's work.



**Mrs. Wafa Saab**

Wafa Saab is the CEO of a family-owned business, namely Tinol Paints International, which was founded in 1956. The Worldwide Alumni Association of AUB made history by electing Wafa as the first woman president in 2015. She is also president of the WAAAUB EMBA chapter, VP of the International School of Choueifat AA (SABIS), board member of AMIDEAST, BIA (LAU Board of International Advisors), CIH (Civic Influence Hub), Beiteddine Festival, Baalbeck Festival, and the Lebanese Red Cross. Wafa received her undergraduate degree from the Lebanese American University (LAU) in 1991 with a BA in Human Development and her EMBA from AUB in 2007.



## GET TO KNOW

**BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER****What is borderline personality disorder?**

- Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is characterized by a pattern of instability in mood, interpersonal relationships, impulsivity, self-image, and emotions.
- The onset of these characteristics begins by early adulthood and can present in a variety of contexts.

**How is borderline personality disorder diagnosed?**

Diagnosis of borderline personality disorder is based on:

- A thorough interview with your doctor or mental health provider
- A psychological evaluation
- Clinical history
- Meeting the criteria for at least 5 of the signs and symptoms of borderline personality disorder

**What are the common symptoms of borderline personality disorder?**

Some of the most common symptoms of borderline personality disorder include:

- Frantic efforts to avoid abandonment, both real and imagined
- Harmful impulsive behavior such as binge eating, practicing unsafe sex, out-of-control spending, reckless driving
- Having unstable relationships, alternating from idolizing to devaluing the other person
- Distorted self-image, such as seeing oneself as evil or bad, or changing values or goals
- Having low self-worth
- Intense mood swings, experiencing periods of intense depressive mood or anxiety
- Recurrent suicidal behavior and gestures, or self-mutilating behaviors
- Chronic feelings of emptiness
- Intense, inappropriate anger and difficulty controlling anger
- Paranoid ideation related to stress
- Dissociative feelings such as disconnecting from your thoughts or sense of identity

To know more about Borderline Personality Disorder and the treatments available, please visit our Mental Health Resources page at: <http://www.embracefund.org/node/268>

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Embrace continues to work towards its mission and cater to the financial needs of patients in Lebanon by providing assistance to underprivileged individuals who are unable to cover the costs of treatment.

Embrace relies on your donations in order to continue its mission. Every small donation is a step towards saving a life.

**To support Embrace's initiatives, donate:**

### Online

Donate a gift to Embrace Fund

[https://secure.www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/AVB/onlinegiving/showGivingForm.jsp?form\\_id=186445&preview=1](https://secure.www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/AVB/onlinegiving/showGivingForm.jsp?form_id=186445&preview=1)

### Wire Transfer

Account Name: American University of Beirut

Donation Account Number: 0-600224-115

IBAN: LB16 0115 0000 0000 0006 0022 4115

Swift Address: CITILBBE

Designation: Embrace Fund

### Checks Payable to

AUB – Embrace Fund

### Our Address

Embrace Fund

Department of Psychiatry, Building 56

American University of Beirut Medical Center

Beirut, Lebanon

T: +961- 1- 350 000 ext. 7828 - 5658

[info@embracefund.org](mailto:info@embracefund.org)

[www.facebook.com/EmbraceFund](http://www.facebook.com/EmbraceFund)

