

**AUG
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2020**

ISSUE NO. 9

POST BEIRUT'S BLAST UPDATE



embrace



DISASTER RESPONSE AFTER AUGUST 4TH

The mental health impact of the Beirut explosion continues to lay its weight on the Lebanese five months post the blast. In response to the August 4th events, Embrace's rapid and efficient response to tackle the post-trauma stress, as well as the long-term mental health consequences of this mass trauma has taken precedence and topped the organization's priorities. Embrace has mobilized many initiatives with its response aiming to address the short-term and long-term mental health impact of this collective traumatic event that all Lebanese have experienced.

Following the explosion, the immediate response on the ground from the Lebanese citizens, civil society, diaspora, and international organizations has been medical aid, housing, and food security for those in the direct area of the blast. However, the less tangible and visible mental health needs are even larger than those that can be seen by the eye. The explosion which has left an estimate of 300,000 homeless, more than 200 persons dead, and more than 6000 injured, has also left a large number of children and adults feeling overwhelmed, insecure, and confused about how to adapt to the present and move forward with their lives. All of this is happening on top of existing health, social, economic, and political stress nationally. The mental health needs post this disaster are both short-term and long-term.



01.



02.

INITIAL POST TRAUMATIC REACTIONS: *THE FIRST 10 DAYS VS. 1 MONTH AFTER THE BLAST*

Embrace, in collaboration with Mysay app, surveyed to understand the mental health of people in Lebanon, shortly after the blast, and one month later.

903 men and women aged between 18 and 65+ answered brief questions about depression, anxiety, and traumatic experiences. We found that 83% of people reported feeling sad almost every day and lost pleasure in things they like, while 78% of people reported being very anxious and worried every day. Also, more than 84% felt extra sensitive to loud noises and dangers. On a relatively positive note, the majority of people said that they found support and solace in friends, family, or spirituality.

One month later, we asked the same questions to about half of those people. We found that, on average, they were feeling better but many were still in distress. The number of people feeling very sad and anxious dropped to 55% and 46%, respectively.

Interestingly, women on average reported being more distressed and showed less improvement as time passed. This could be due to many reasons, such as women being more willing to report their distress than men, or women being burdened by additional life stressors (e.g., being primary caregivers)



83% of respondents
reported feeling sad almost
every day



78% of respondents
reported being very anxious
and worried every day

1 MONTH LATER



55% of respondents
reported feeling sad almost
every day



46% of respondents
reported being very anxious
and worried every day



03.

DIRECT COMMUNITY INTERVENTION

On Ground Zero from day one, Embrace's experienced team of operators initiated clean-ups and provided direct emotional support and psychological first aid, as a founding partner in BASECAMP, the largest coalition of civil society groups which led the relief efforts and provided basic assistance, food, and reconstruction services.

MORE THAN 200 PERSONS WERE PROVIDED WITH DIRECT EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ON GROUND ZERO THROUGH MOBILE TEAMS AND FIXED TENTS.



04.

FACE TO FACE COMMUNITY SUPPORT SESSIONS

Since the first week of the explosion, Embrace has been approached by tens of organizations requesting to provide community group sessions to staff members and groups, aimed at providing psychological support, raising awareness about the psychological reactions post-trauma, the red-flags that might emerge in the coming weeks, and liaising the community to available resources.

Embrace has responded to every one of these requests for community support sessions and has held several face to face sessions for people impacted by the events in Lebanon.

Embrace supported different organizations and groups such as Legal Agenda, Foyer St. Georges, Securite Assurance, Rotaract Club, and different groups of parents and kids affected.



05.

EMBRACE LIFELINE (1564) THE NATIONAL HOTLINE FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Despite damages to the Embrace Lifeline's call center as a result of the explosion, and minor injuries to our staff, our operations were not interrupted and the Embrace Lifeline continued through its mission to support the community affected by the blast. The helpline services have been responding around the clock, to the needs of all individuals in emotional distress as a result of the blast, and those experiencing suicidal ideation and acts as a channel for community referrals across the humanitarian fields. The lifeline was signposted in all national mental health awareness material as part of the National MHPSS Response to Beirut Explosions.

As part of the national plans, the Lifeline will increase its operating hours from 17 hours to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by the beginning of 2021.

MORE HOPEMAKERS ON BOARD

In October 2020, 25 new volunteers received the Embrace Lifeline rigorous 4 Day training which prepares them to become hotline operators and join the team of volunteers, who are supervised by licensed mental health professionals, to save lives and instill hope when all hope seems a lot.



EMBRACE LIFELINE REPORTS



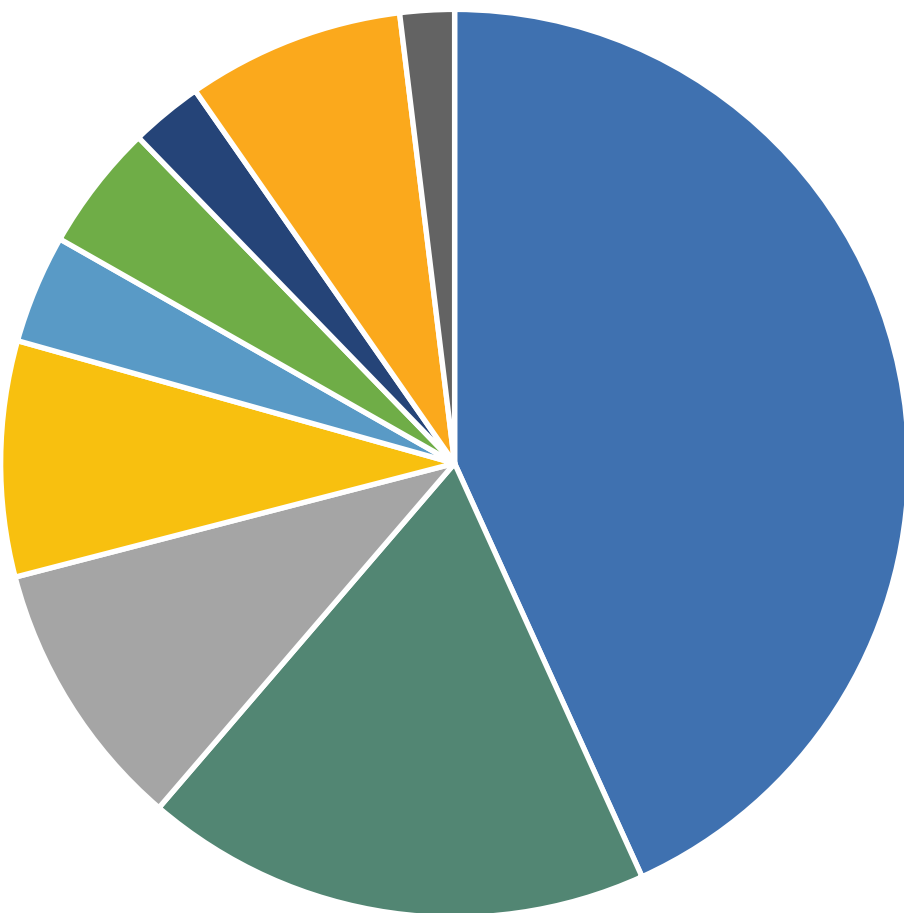
29%

of callers to the Embrace Lifeline were referred to different mental health and social services in Lebanon.



94%

of callers who reached out to the Embrace Lifeline, indicated feeling better and more hopeful by the end of the call.

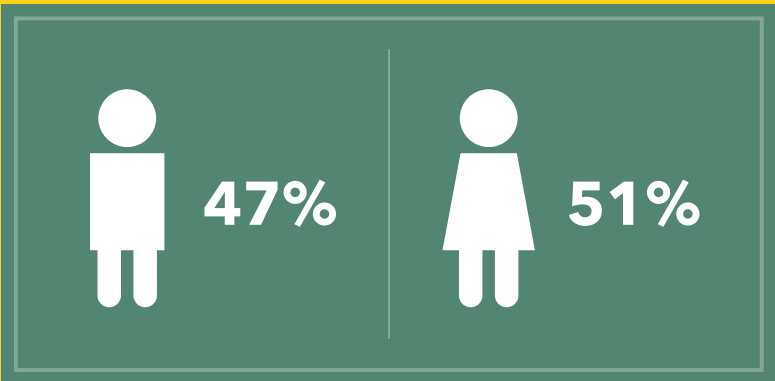


TYPES OF CALL RECEIVED TO THE EMBRACE LIFELINE

- 67 % EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
- 28 % SUICIDE IDEATION PRESENT
- 15 % FREQUENT CALLER
- 13 % THIRD PARTY INVOLVED
- 6 % CONCERNS ABOUT COVID
- 7 % SOCIOECONOMIC CONCERNS
- 4 % LOOKING FOR REFERRALS
- 12 % RELATED TO BEIRUT EXPLOSION
- 3 % ATTEMPT IN PROGRESS
- 2 % THIRD PARTY BYSTANDER

Numbers displayed are a representation of only registered data and not total calls.

The Embrace Lifeline is in collaboration with the National Mental Health Program



SEX of callers reaching out to the Embrace Lifeline

IMPACT OF THE EMBRACE LIFELINE

In the months between August and November 2020,

THE EMBRACE LIFELINE HAS RECEIVED MORE THAN 2,239 CALLS



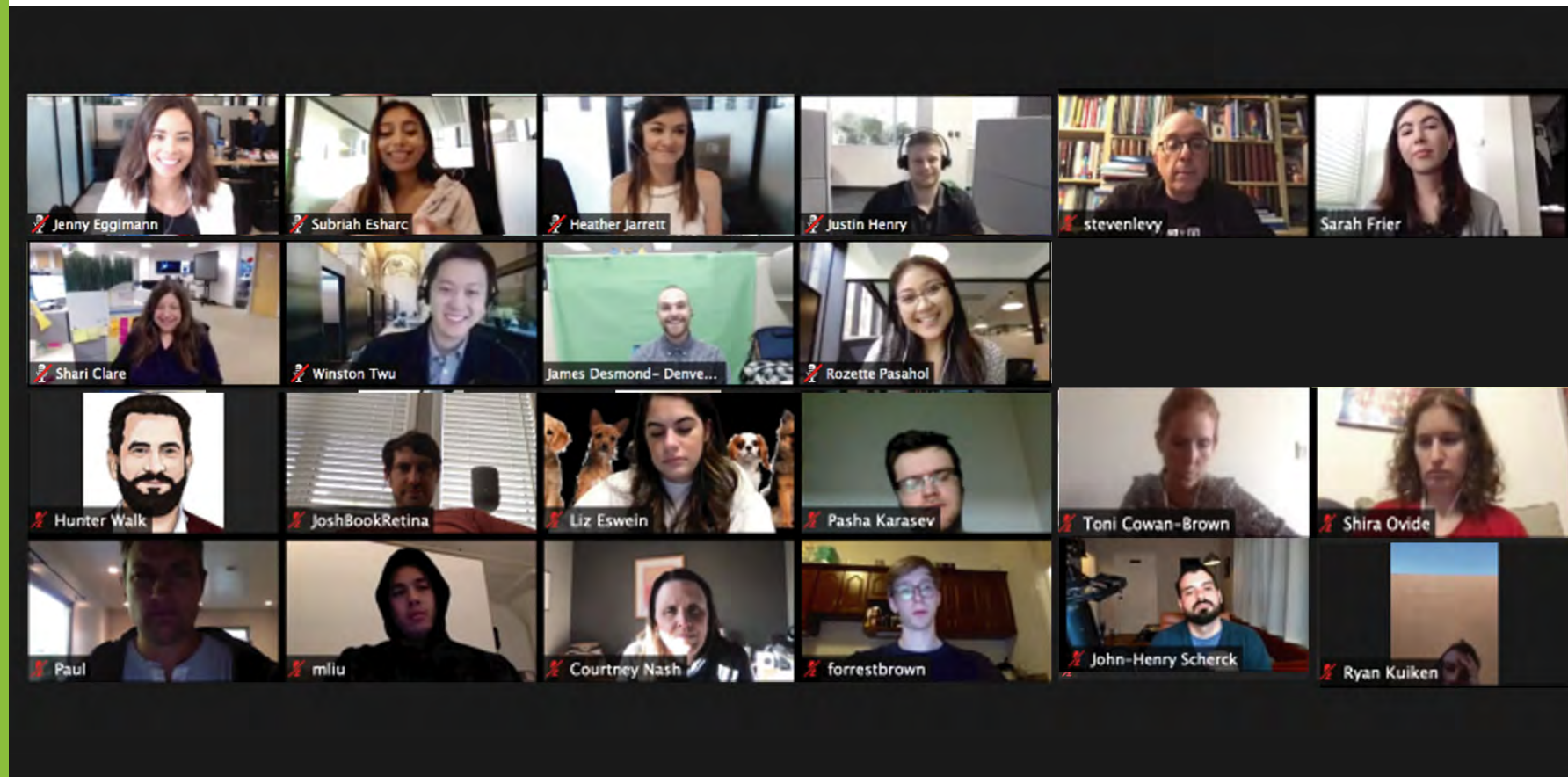
06.

ZOOM INTO MENTAL HEALTH

Embrace has been providing online community support sessions for several organizations and different Lebanese Diaspora groups. These sessions also included providing psychological support, raising awareness about the psychological reactions to Beirut's explosion.

Since August, Embrace has provided psychological support to more than **750** children and adults in different areas of Beirut and also abroad.

Some of the organizations and groups supported: Murex, CISCO, Lebanese Red Cross, Adyan Foundation, Beirut Digital District, MSD, AUB Psychology Student Society, and others.





EMBRACE'S NEWLY LAUNCHED MENTAL HEALTH CENTER 07.

As an immediate response to the Beirut Blast, and with the support of grantors and donors, Embrace reacted immediately to set up a quality care mental health center in Beirut to respond to the emerging and increasing mental health needs of the community. The Embrace Mental Health Center was quickly set up and staffed with 2 part-time psychiatrists, 3 part-time psychologists, a social worker, and a clinical assistant. The center caters to all individuals living in Lebanon of all nationalities, including adolescents and children of ages 10 and older who are experiencing any mental health problem primary or secondary to the Beirut Blast.

SINCE ITS LAUNCH IN AUGUST, THE CENTER HAS SERVED 220 BENEFICIARIES AND CONDUCTED MORE THAN 690 MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATIONS

The center is currently also collaborating with pharmacies across governorates to dispense free psychiatric medications to beneficiaries seen in its clinic, through support that Embrace has received from its donors. Embrace's Mental Health Center aims to cover all gaps in inpatient care from prevention and awareness, to outpatient care, access to medications, and soon inpatient care.



08.

CAMPAIGNS AND MEDIA

As part of Embrace's plan in pursuing wider scale support to the community, Embrace launched multiple media campaigns to raise more awareness about mental health in Lebanon and about Embrace's different interventions.

7A22AK TEHKINA

After the first month of Beirut's Blast, Embrace launched the "7a22ak Te7kina" campaign with the contribution of ITS Communications, to encourage everyone in Lebanon to reach out to the national emotional support and suicide prevention hotline 1564. This campaign reemphasizes the right of every individual (directly or indirectly) affected by the blast to speak up and voice their thoughts and emotions to the Embrace Life-line's trusted team of volunteer operators who never failed to diligently provide their time, effort, and listening skills for the greater psychological wellbeing of every person who reaches out.



WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY 2020

On World Mental Health Day, October 10, 2020, Embrace arranged a stunt campaign where volunteers shared their messages of hope, warmth, and support to people directly on the streets. Volunteers circulated in different streets of Beirut and Saida to remind people that as we struggle every day with the dire socio-economic situation and the distance caused by the pandemic, we chose to meet you, on the streets to remind you that we are always here for each other, no matter the circumstances.



"WE EMBRACE YOU"

Our third campaign launched in the past 4 months of 2020 is #WeEmbraceYou. Having lived one of the hardest years, our people are in dire need of a deep embrace to strengthen their mental health & help them overcome one of the hardest phases of their lives.

In this campaign, we wanted to relieve some of the feelings of anxiety, fear & loneliness that might have been developing due to the circumstances, as well as shed light on the little things that matter as much as the embrace that we miss and need the most! It served as a reminder that Embrace is here; to hold everyone tight, no matter the circumstances, through our hotline 1564 or our free mental health clinics.

#WeEmbraceYou



EMBRACE WINS THE WAJIH AJOUZ AWARD

A few words from our Director of Communications, Hiba Dandachli: This campaign started with simple questions, personal questions... How do I feel? What do I miss the most? Can I still enjoy the little things? What if I can't? Who can be there for me?

The answer was "Embrace". An embrace is what we miss most! It's felt and seen in the little things. An idea developed and filmed by the talented director Mahmoud Hojeij and re-edited with Simon Soueid to give hope...

A simple message of warmth and support to the people in our country, who, throughout this year, struggled and still are, with emotional and mental wellbeing.

We wanted to remind every person that an embrace can always be found at Embrace where we provide free & direct emotional and mental health support for EVERYONE so we can together overcome these hardships.

We are extremely grateful to have won the Wajih Ajouz Award for #عنا بتلاقيها الغمرة at the Samir Kassir Foundation Dinner and we celebrated the little things that keep pushing us forward!



Support from our donors has not only allowed us to strengthen and expand our direct services to the community but has also made it possible to grow our team, recruit and retain a proficient team of 17 members. Our team is contributing daily to the core mission of our organization, and to reversing the severe brain drain taking place in the country given the high rate of immigration of the Lebanese workforce, especially in the field of healthcare.

DONATE TO EMBRACE AND SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH IN LEBANON

Your contribution counts.

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www.embracelebanon.org

Donate through bank transfer
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