I don’t want to hurt you or myself: An awareness of and addressing depression in Black Gay Men
Some facts about depression

- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention estimates that every 9 1/2 minutes, someone, somewhere across the country commits suicide;

- The World Health Organization suggests that depression is projected to become the leading cause of disability and the second leading contributor to the global burden of disease in the next 8 years;
Some facts about depression and HIV

- Estimates: up to 50% of people with HIV have a mental illness such as depression, and 13% have both mental illness and substance abuse issues;
US CDC – National Violent Death Reporting System - in 2009 – from 16 states (16,418 deaths): the crude death rate was 20.1 per 100,000

- 12.2 per 100K or 9,949 deaths were suicides;
- 5.0 per 100K or 4,057 were homicides and deaths by legal intervention (by police or legal authority)

Suicides:
- were preceded primarily by mental health,
- intimate partner, or
- Physical health problems or some type of crisis occurring 2 weeks prior

Manner of suicides:
- 51.8% were by firearms
- 24.7% were by hanging/strangulation/suffocation
- 17.2 was by poisoning

- For men – 56.7% - used firearms; 25.3% - strangulation/hanging/suffocation
- For women – 36.9% used poisons; 33.8% used firearms
Mental health diagnosis prior to suicide:

- 41.0% described experiencing a depressed mood at the time of their deaths;
- 41.1% diagnosed with mental health problems; 31.3% were receiving treatment;
- 74.1% were diagnosed with depression/dysthymia;
- 14.6% with bi-polar disorder;
- 10.6% with anxiety disorder;
- 19.8% had a history of suicide attempts;
- 28.3% disclosed their intent before their suicide;
- 33.1% left a note.
Homicides:

- at higher rates among Black males 20 to 24
- Majority of homicides involved use of firearms
- Deaths occurred in a house/apartment or on the street/highway
- Often preceded by arguments and interpersonal conflicts or in conjunction with another crime.
Interviews with Black gay men: on what led or caused them to attempt harm to themselves, which included drug use and abuse, as a form of suicide.

https://vimeo.com/57219436
Some facts about depression: Black gay men, and HIV

- Research estimates that 1 in 5 Black gay men is dealing with depression;

- The Archives of General Psychiatry suggested that as many as 1 in 3 persons with HIV may suffer from depression;
Some facts about depression and HIV

- Studies show that people who do not know that they are HIV-positive are more likely to engage in risk behaviors associated with HIV transmission;

- Research has revealed that some gay men described engaging in unsafe sex when depressed because they were less concerned about the consequences.
Why my feeling of sadness could be more than...

- Fluctuations in the levels of neurochemicals in the brain, which regulate mood, and which serve as electrical bridges to help transmit messages, contributes to depression.
Depression, as a mental illness, is nothing to be ashamed and embarrassed about; it is treatable.

Research says that if I was born with short alleles on the serotonin or any other neurotransmitter genes, and when exposed to stressful life events, I am likely to become depressed.

“I should not blame myself for how I feel”
What to do, who to call?

- If you feel you are tired of living, don’t want to go on anymore, there is no one you trust to talk with about how you feel, no one who would understand what you’re going through, **CALL**: The **National Suicide Prevention Hotline** at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- The **Trevor Project** - **Trevor Lifeline** 1-866-488-7386

If you know someone who speaks often of killing him or herself, or someone who is in a crisis, make the call for him or her, or call 911 and tell the operator you believe that the person seems likely to harm him or herself. You have a duty and a responsibility to yourself and to another.
For more information, contact Antoine Craigwell at DBGM at www.dbgm.org or antoineb@dbgm.org