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Just One Reason

A SCOPING EVALUATION REPORT

Dr Neil Hall & Caroline Nahlous

About the authors

Dr Neil Hall is Director of Academic Programs (Social Work and Communities) at Western Sydney University (WSU). He is a senior social work academic specialising in the social determinants of male health and suicide prevention, and is a Co-founder and a lead researcher with the university's Centre for Male Health.

Caroline Nahlous is a final year student at WSU in the Bachelor of Social Work, who completed her final field placement with Dr Hall.

Contact information:

Dr Neil Hall
Social Work and Communities
School of Social Sciences, Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797 Penrith NSW 2751

n.hall@westernsydney.edu.au

A SCOPING EVALUATION REPORT 'JUST ONE REASON' by Stuart O'Neill

INTRODUCTION

"Just One Reason" (JOR) is a small book by Stuart O'Neill that aims to provide hope and support to people from all walks of life as a reminder to name a reason to not commit suicide. It includes ten chapters covering different topics related to suicide prevention. The author and Dr Neil Hall from the Centre for Male Health at Western Sydney University (WSU) discussed conducting research on the safety, efficacy, and effectiveness of JOR during Men's Health Week 2022. A research proposal was developed outlining the research framework, research objectives, products, ownership, authorship, and intellectual property. The first stage of the research was a four-month scoping exercise, which included background literature, sales data, comparisons with other books on the market, anecdotal comments from the JOR Facebook page, and an anonymous online survey of JOR Facebook group members. This report provides feedback on the scoping exercise.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

In Australia, there are on average nine suicides every day, and seven of those are by males. Therefore, a range of prevention strategies on many levels is vital. To provide background information to understanding the value of JOR in contributing to the prevention of suicide, the evaluators have explored a targeted selection of recent literature that discusses firstly, the nature of mental health, suicide, men and help-seeking; and secondly, what are safe and effective responses to suicide.

Mental Health, Suicide, Men and Help-Seeking

Independence is viewed as a masculine trait and can be associated with risky health behaviors and health service avoidance in older men. The authors argue that independence has different meanings and that the hegemonic construction of masculinity places an expectation on men to be independent, tough, and emotionally restricted. The loss of independence is associated with ageing, and lay perspectives of successful ageing among older men are closely tied to being able to maintain their independence. The second text discusses the increase in suicide deaths in Australia despite increased funding and program activity. Employment is a major factor in individual well-being and plays a key role in organizing an individual's life. The situational approach to suicide prevention acknowledges the predominant association of suicide with situational distress and seeks to address contextual, systemic, and socio-cultural risk and protective factors. There are clear links between economic recession, unemployment, and the risk of suicide.

Safe and Effective Responses to Suicide

The importance of safety planning interventions, including crisis response planning (CRP) and safety planning intervention (SPI), is highlighted, along with the role of connection and distraction in reducing suicide risk. Psychotherapeutic interventions such as cognitive therapy for suicide prevention (CT-SP), cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), problem-solving therapy (PST), and attachment-based family therapy are found to be effective in reducing suicidal ideation and attempts. However, limitations in the current state of science reveal the need for additional research and improved evidence-based treatments to prevent suicide. The most effective preventive strategies include the restriction of access to lethal means, policies to reduce harmful alcohol use, school-based awareness programs, pharmacological and psychological treatment of depression, and policy responses to mitigate the impact of economic

downturns, which are especially relevant in the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODS

The scoping evaluation adopted a number of layers with which to evaluate the book, in agreement between the author and the evaluators, to address the main parameters around safety, content and impact. These layers were:

1. *The place of JOR in the market.* This was ascertained through a comparison of books assessed by the evaluators to be equivalent to JOR in some way. The comparison was based on date, dimensions, print length, cost and content measured against the benchmarks raised in the background literature.
2. *JOR sales figures and trends.* These figures were provided by the author's company and analysed by the evaluators.
3. *Anecdotal comments from the JOR Facebook Group.* The author's company sourced and collated these comments, and the evaluators analysed for common patterns and themes.
4. *An online survey.* The evaluators developed an anonymous survey utilising Qualtrics software, and distributed it to the JOR Facebook Group with an invitation to participate voluntarily. Dr Hall received permission by the Administrator to join the Facebook group in order to post the invitation. He included information about support services in the event that people felt distressed while completing the survey. He has also remained in the Facebook Group in case there are participants who need additional assistance beyond what the Group is equipped to provide.

The umbrella framework for the evaluation is the Situational Approach to Suicide Prevention (Ashfield, Macdonald & Smith 2017; Guntuku, Hall & Smith 2021), which understands suicide and its prevention to be impacted by the build-up of distressing life situations rather than solely being related to individual psychology or mental illness.

LIMITATIONS

The most important point to note in relation to the following findings is that, as a scoping study, the analysis is only indicative rather than conclusive. The evaluators worked with a small data set, particularly with the anecdotal comments and online survey, although some important insights have been revealed through the participation of very enthusiastic and compassionate purchasers of the book.

A second point to note is that in looking for other comparable books on the market, the evaluators excluded large text books or tomes of theoretical perspectives on suicide, to focus more on narratives, self-help and practical workbooks.

Last, the scoping report was limited by with the resources available which, without funding, meant drawing on the contributions of the social work academic, and a final year social work student on placement.

FINDINGS

1. The place of JOR in the market

Table 1: Comparison with other books

Book Name	Publication Date	Dimensions	Print Length	Price
Just One Reason By Stuart O'Neill	20 June 2020	11.2 x 5 x 1cm	84 pages	\$14.90 hardcover (other merchandise also available)
The Suicidal Thoughts Workbook: CBT Skills to Reduce Emotional Pain, Increase Hope, and Prevent Suicide By Kathryn Hope Gordon and Thomas Ellis Joiner Jr	1 July 2021	25.4cm x 20.32 x 1.03	184 pages	\$32.25 for Paperback \$16.28 for Kindle
Saving Ourselves from Suicide - Before and After: How to Ask for Help, Recognize Warning Signs, and Navigate Grief By Linda Pacha	19 June 2020	21.59 x 13.97 x 1.7cm	300 pages	\$20.98 for paperback \$29.50 for hardcover \$6.99 for Kindle
When It Is Darkest: Why People Die by Suicide and What We Can Do to Prevent It By Rory O'Connor	2 July 2021	21.59 cm x 13.34 x 2.79	352 pages	\$28.00 for paperback \$14.99 for Kindle \$14.39 for Audio CD
Suicide Prevention Pocket Guidebook: How to Support Someone Who is Having Suicidal Feelings By Joy Hibbins	5 January 2022	19.2 x 13.6cm	192 pages	\$17.41 for paperback
Suicide-Prevention Intervention Postvention By Earl A Grollman	1 September 2018	21.59cm x 13.97 x 0.89	160 pages	\$12.10 on paperback \$26.56 on Kindle

As can be seen from Table 1, JOR is comparatively more portable in terms of size and length, making it truly a pocketbook. Its size also means the content is more focused on a single clear purpose of helping readers to identify a reason to keep going. It is more affordable than almost all comparable books on the market and is easily accessible except for the absence of an electronic edition. All the comparable books are fairly recent in terms of publication date. Whilst

primarily targeted at an Australian audience, the first-person narrative is written in a way that would have resonance with other English-speaking target audiences. It is not certain how well JOR, or in fact any of these books, would translate into other community languages.

The five books reviewed all focus on suicide prevention and provide different approaches and resources for readers. Gordon and Joiner's workbook is meant to support readers no matter where they are in their head and has exercises and worksheets to help identify reasons for living, manage intense emotions, and establish a safe environment. Pacha's book covers topics like asking for help and recognizing warning signs and is based on the author's own experience of grief and loss. O'Connor's book is an academic work that enhances understanding of suicide, while Hibbins' guidebook provides practical skills and knowledge to support someone going through a crisis. Finally, Grollman's book is a guide to understanding and coping with suicide and encourages community action. Readers should choose a book that suits their needs and level of crisis.

JOR, therefore, has a unique place in the Australian market, which may well explain its growing popularity.

2. Anecdotal comments from Facebook

Sales figures indicate the book is becoming popular. Anecdotal comments from a Facebook group suggest that readers find the book valuable and helpful, with some even carrying it with them daily. People have bought the book for themselves, or others and it has helped to start conversations about suicide and build supportive communities. Some comments suggest the book has even saved lives. These comments provide context for an online survey.

"I bought this after attempting suicide. It's a great book and I carry it every day".

"Going to be a Godsend on my dark days. Very valuable".

"The message is so powerful and the fact that it is spoken by a peer is what really resonates".

"This book has given me and my family the tools to open up the conversation about suicide".

"Today it's sitting on her little table and she's now found 6 things to write in it... reasons she knows she wants to remain alive to do, be, see, feel and hear".

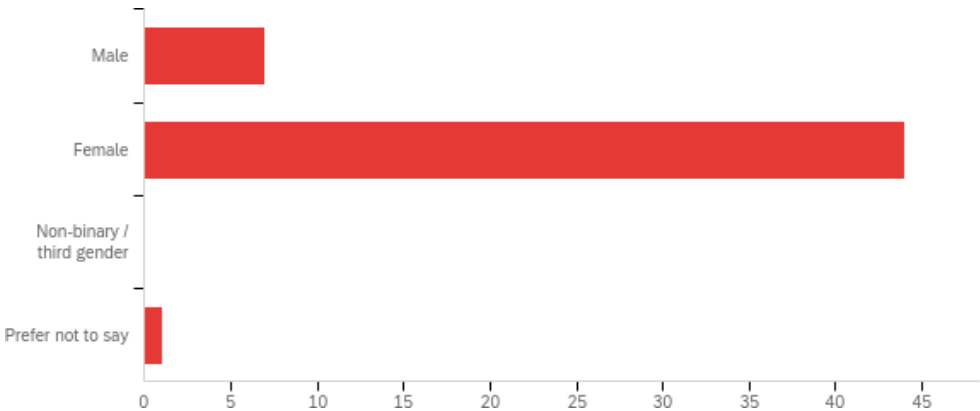
"Wish I had known about it before losing my 19 year old son to suicide last year, I believe this could save lives".

These anecdotal comments – encompassing benefits to self, family and the wider community – provide a poignant introduction to the online survey.

3. Anonymous online survey

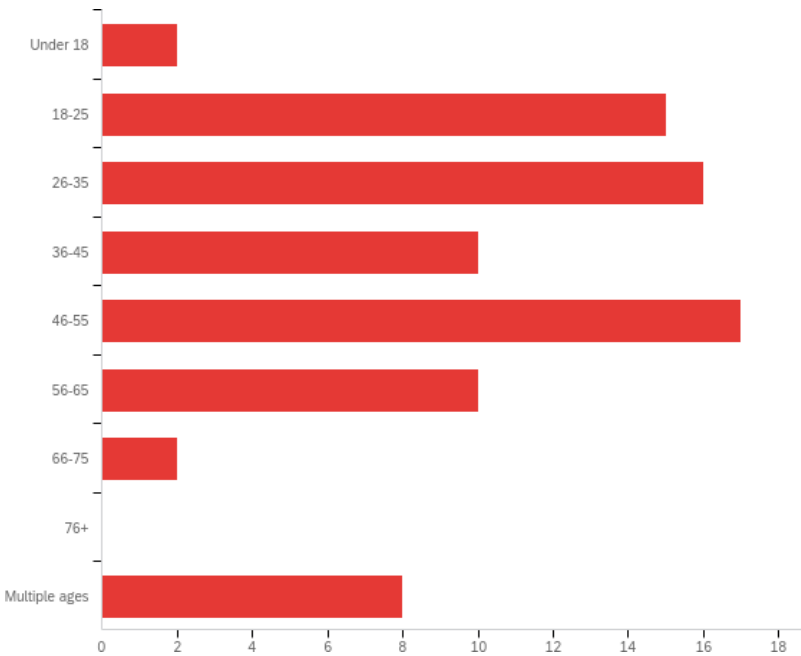
An anonymous survey was conducted online through a private Facebook group with over 1,900 members, representing almost half of all book purchases. The survey collected information on participants' backgrounds, reasons for purchasing the book, usage, safety, usefulness, and open-ended comments. The author and group administrator gave permission for the survey, which was endorsed by the author's company. The survey suggests that the book has had a positive impact on many readers. The sensitive nature of the topic necessitated protecting the privacy of the participants.

Gender of participants

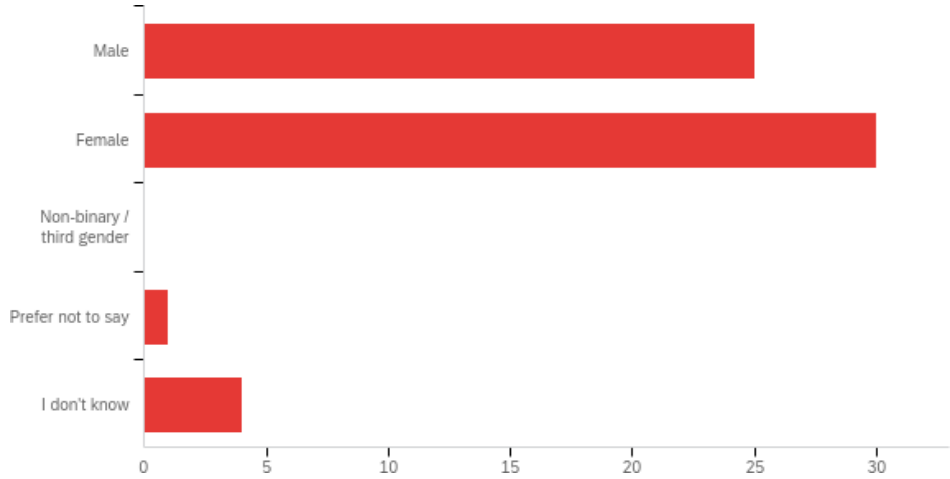


As can be seen above, the vast majority of participants (84.6%) in the survey identified as female. It is worth noting that the Facebook group contains an estimated 70% of members identifying as female. This survey is not analysing the reasons behind such gender distribution, but it is fair to say that the survey participation is a clear gender representation of the group.

Age of person for whom the book was purchased

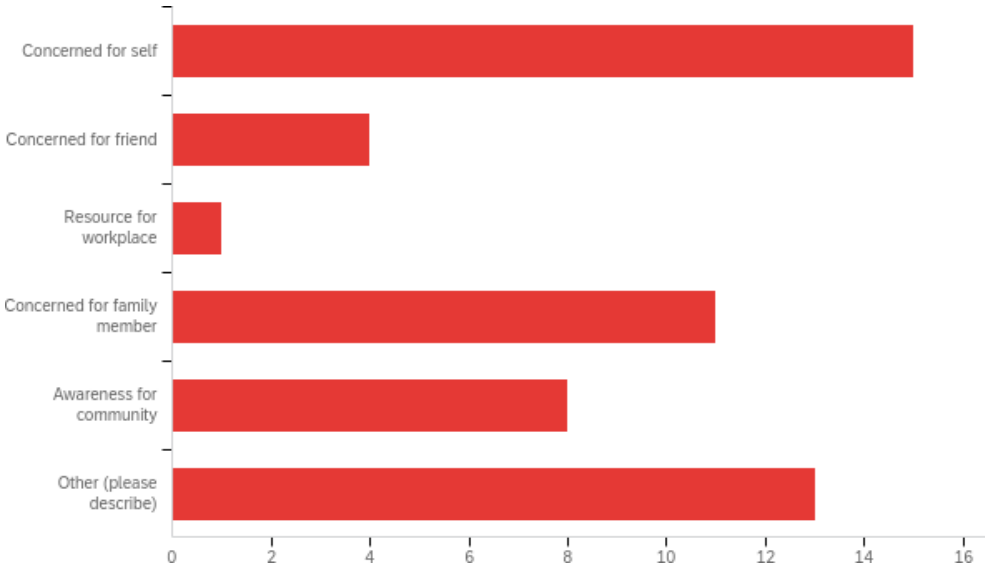


Gender of person for whom the book was purchased



The above figures provide an indication of the age and gender of the person for whom the book was purchased. The roughly equal distribution of ages across the lifespan from 18 to 65, and the similar percentages of male and female recipients of the book, indicate that the survey participants saw the book as relevant for all. It may also suggest that they bought it for themselves, their partner or their adult child. This supposition is supported by the reported reasons for purchasing the book.

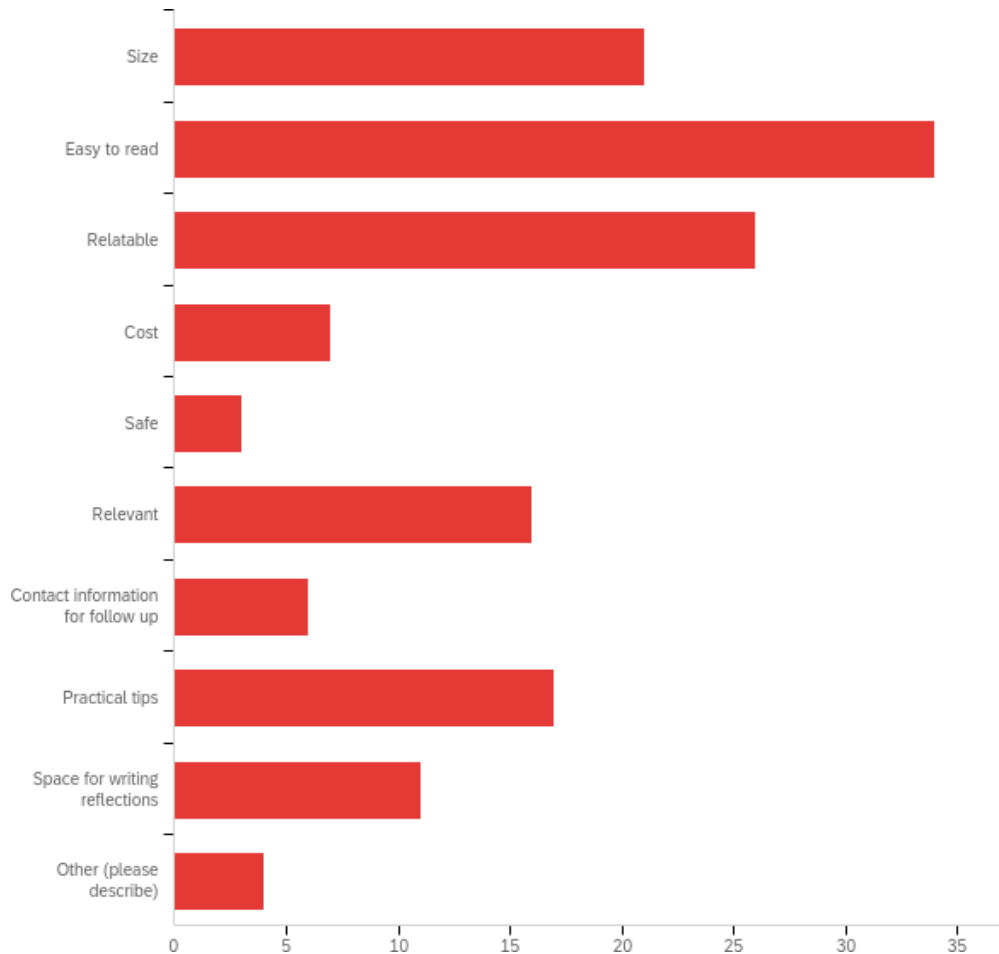
Main reason for purchase



The survey found that the top two reasons for purchasing the book were concern for self and concern for family members, and the "other" category also received significant responses. Some respondents gave nuanced reasons for purchasing the book, such as using it as a resource for grieving or promoting it to practitioners overseas. Few respondents reported purchasing the book as a resource for the workplace, suggesting that most were individual purchasers rather than representatives for organizations. Additionally, the responses confirmed that the age and gender of the book recipients differed from the age and gender of the survey participants.

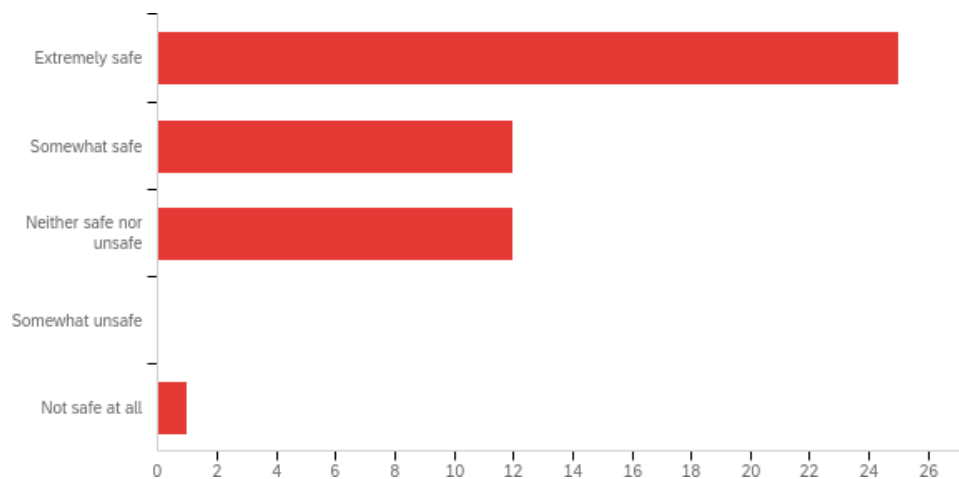
Participants were asked to select the three most useful features of JOR, and the responses.

Most useful features



The top three most useful features of JOR, according to purchasers, are easy readability, relatability, and size. Practical tips, particularly on finding a reason to keep living, were also well-received. Participants also found value in the community created around the book and optional paraphernalia. Safety was not a reported feature, but participants felt safe after receiving and reading JOR, with 84% likely to recommend it to others.

Feelings of safety



The survey showed that 50% of the participants felt extremely safe and 24% felt somewhat safe when discussing suicide, indicating that the book and the online support group were valuable sources of safety. Only one participant reported feeling unsafe. 34 participants had a clinician/counsellor/therapist, and of those, 29.4% reported that their clinician was aware of the book. The open-ended text responses were overwhelmingly positive, congratulating the author on the sensitive treatment of the issue, the book's value in saving lives, and its helpfulness in processing grief post-suicide. One participant suggested an online version of the book could further increase its effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The book "Just One Reason" (JOR) measures well against benchmarks for safe and effective messaging about suicide prevention, with its core message being to help people identify reasons for living. It also provides opportunities for connection through giving the book as a gift, building community through the Facebook group, and identifying safety plans over an extended time period. While JOR is not a form of therapy, it can assist people in identifying triggers and strategies for avoiding them, and is accessible with its low cost, plain language, and small size. The book achieves a balance of appropriate language that destigmatises messages without normalising or sensationalising suicide, making it a safe messaging tool. The book has been well-received, with over 50% of survey respondents already connected to a mental health professional, and sales figures of 13,000 up to the point of analysis (September 2022) on an upward trajectory, reaching 20,000 sales in November 2022 in both domestic and international.

CONCLUSION

Although only providing indicative rather than comprehensive findings, all aspects covered within the parameters of this scoping evaluation point to JOR being a safe and effective suicide prevention strategy. An expansion of the size and source of research participants would add much needed wisdom to the topic, particularly gleaning feedback from large organisational representatives, first responders (e.g. police, paramedics, mental health crisis teams) and health and medical practitioners.

Additionally, there are some curious hints in the findings that are beyond the remit of this scoping evaluation, but which it would be worthwhile to explore in future research.

collaborations. For example, it appeared from the survey to be mostly women who bought the book but that does not necessarily make any conclusion about gender differences in this form of help-seeking. Similarly, the gender composition of the Facebook group would provide some insights about the importance and operation of such groups. Other studies (e.g. Pointon et al) demonstrate the value of face-to-face men's groups and a comparison of different types of group intervention across genders would be extremely worthwhile.

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