

# embrace

fund at AUBMC



## "fikko el 3i2deh"

In October 2013, **Embrace Fund** launched the first large-scale nationwide media-driven campaign in Lebanon to address the society's attitude and stigma towards mental illness. The campaign was sponsored by our gracious donors, Deloitte, Bjorg, Gandour, illy, Booz and co., Chronora and Express International. The purpose is to engage patients, families, healthcare providers, lawmakers and governmental agencies in a constructive dialogue around mental health care.

Each year Embrace will continue to build on our first campaign by providing current information about mental health and mental illness in Lebanon. Our goal is to dispel the myths and misconceptions about mental illness and create a community of respect and acceptance.

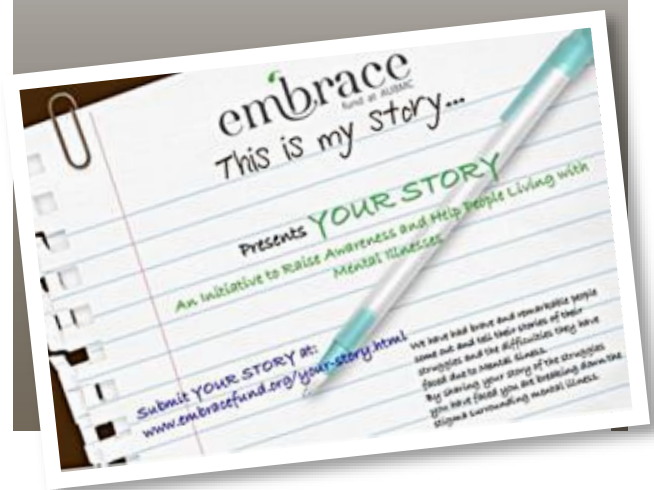
## Your Story"

When you write down and share the difficulties you have faced due to mental illness you help make another person feel less alone, you give hope, and you foster compassion and understanding.

"Writing about traumatic, stressful or emotional events has been found to result in improvements in both physical and psychological health ..."

Share "Your Story" with Embrace and help someone else who is struggling. Let them know they are not alone.

<https://www.embracefund.org/your-story.html>





## Changing How We Think About Mental Illness

The symptoms of mental illness affect a person on many levels. There are the biological and psychological factors that lead to debilitating physical and mental symptoms. And then there are the feelings of shame and personal disappointment, the hurtful self-perceived stigma that is reinforced by society's stigma of mental illness.

The stigma of mental illness contributes to prejudice and discrimination, diminished opportunities for workforce employment, the feeling of being disconnected from society, family and friends. It generates feelings of worthlessness, causing the person to question the true cause of their mental health problems. Stigma creates a barrier to asking for help and receiving effective treatment.

It is important to examine our own perception of mental illness. It is important to understand what mental illness is and is not. It is crucial we replace the negative stereotypes of mentally ill people with hopeful, nurturing and compassionate views of people who are experiencing

mental illness and mental health problems.

As you challenge your own feelings about mental illness consider also fighting the stigma that exist in Lebanon today. Fight inaccurate and hurtful representations of mental illness, by educating others about what mental illness is and is not. Tell media

outlets poor or misleading representations of mental illness are not acceptable. Advocate for laws, which protect the mentally ill from discrimination.

Mental illness is a disorder of the brain. Like most diseases of the body, mental illness has many causes that can include genetics, biological, environmental and social-cultural factors.

### The Experience of Stigma\*

**Shame**

**Blame**

**Secrecy**

**"Black sheep of the family"**

**Isolation**

**Social exclusion**

**Stereotypes**

**Discrimination**

**Mental illness is no one's fault.**

**It is not a character flaw.**

**It is a treatable medical condition.**

Most importantly, mental illness is treatable and with treatment those who live with mental illness have the opportunity to lead full and productive lives.

## Embrace the Fund Making a Difference in Patient Lives

The two most cited reasons a person does not seek treatment for mental health issues are stigma and financial cost. Patients must pay for mental health care services out of their own pocket to receive proper medical and psychological treatment. In Lebanon mental illnesses are not covered by health insurance. The costs of treatment, for many people in Lebanon, are simply out of their financial reach.

One of our primary missions at Embrace is to raise money to provide effective treatments for patients who cannot afford proper medical or psychological care.

Since our inception, in July of 2013, Embrace has covered the expenses of 5

patients in need of costly psychiatric and psychological medical treatments.

Embrace has had the privilege to help cover the expenses of a Syrian adolescent who was in need of an extensive psychological evaluation, 3 adults with severe depression in need of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and the medical follow up, and we covered half of the financial cost of 1 young woman who has bipolar disorder who required hospitalization in the psychiatry inpatient unit. Our goal is to cover as many needy patients as possible. However, we cannot do that without donations from people like you. Please donate to Embrace and help us help those who are most in need.

## Embrace Participates in National Policy Dialogue



On April 24<sup>th</sup> Embrace participated in a national policy dialogue entitled, “**Securing access to quality mental health services in primary health care in Lebanon**”. It brought together different stakeholders: policy and decision makers, mental health specialists, primary care representatives, NGO representatives, representative of National Social Security Fund, as well as researchers and public health scholars to discuss how to provide access to quality mental health services.

Through our participation Embrace assured that the patient's voice is represented in policy dialogues relating to mental health services in Lebanon. Much of the discussion that took place during this dialogue will advise the work of the National Mental Health Care Program.

## Help Embrace Establish A Suicide Hotline

# DONATE to our SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE

Are you ok? Can I help you? I am here to help. These words can mean the difference between life and death. Embrace is raising money to set up a suicide crisis hotline in Lebanon. This hotline will provide callers' free, anonymous support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It will provide access to trained crisis center counselors who will listen and offer help to work through the intense emotional and/or physical pain the caller is experiencing. The hotline's goal is to help people in distress and prevent suicide. However, a suicide crisis hotline is not possible until we raise the necessary money to cover the expenses of running an emotional crisis call center.

*"...What would you do if your family member, friend or loved one was suicidal? What would you say? Would you know what to say? In my experience, it's not just the talking that you do, but the listening. Listen to understand... By just being there, you may just be the turning point*

*that they need." Kevin Briggs, "The Bridge between Suicide and Life" via TED*

## "Into the Dawn"

On March 9<sup>th</sup> Embrace held the first suicide memorial walk in Lebanon. Into the Dawn is a memorial walk to remember people we have lost to suicide and to provide support to each of us who has lost a loved one to suicide. This will be an annual event, which will take place around Suicide Awareness Day in September. The next walk is planned for September 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:45 am. The walk is an opportunity to provide support and give survivors a place where they can be comfortable expressing themselves, a place to find comfort, resources and hope in a judgment-free environment. Come walk into the dawn with us and bring light to the subject of suicide.



*"Sometimes in life, events occur that fracture the very foundation on which we stand. Our life is forever changed and we find ourselves in an unexpected struggle, first just to survive and then to move forward. "*

## Embrace Volunteers in Action

### Screening at City Mall

In October 2013, Embrace volunteers conducted a screening for psychiatric disorders including depression and anxiety at CityMall, Dora. Embrace screened over 95 individuals. Each participant was provided with information about depression and anxiety and if indicated was referred to needed psychiatric services close to them in the community.



### AUB Wellness Fair – Take Charge Live Well



AUB Wellness Fair is a yearly event organized by the AUB Health and Wellness center. AUB students, faculty and staff benefit from free health screenings and assessments. Multidisciplinary teams of family doctors, nurses, nutritionists and physiotherapists provide help and advice. Embrace volunteers participated providing awareness about different mental health issues. As well as, provided screening for students, gave brief consultations, and referrals for those needing mental health services.

### AUB Civic and Volunteering Fair

Embrace joined for the first time this year, the AUB Civic and Volunteering fair, a yearly event that takes place at AUB. The Civic and Volunteering Fair brings together more than 150 non-profit organizations in working in Lebanon. It introduces AUB students to these organizations to foster volunteer activities and engagement in the civil society and organizations in the community.





## Your Story

The stories below have been submitted to Embrace by two brave individuals who are facing the challenges of mental illness. You are not alone, help others and share your experiences, share Your Story.

Back in my early teens I started to have sort of a negative feelings about myself, both on a physical and psychological level, when I first expressed those feelings, I was told to stop being too sensitive and to hold myself together, and I was taught that it's my mistake that I am too fragile. Later on I started to put all sort of anger, frustration and sadness on myself, in many ways, because no one seemed to understand, I developed an eating disorder, along with severe self-harming, from hitting my head against walls to deeply cut my arms and legs by any sharp tool available, as I was growing older, my social anxiety and depression were piling up, I could not hide them anymore, and as people started to realize and actually notice my scars and my instability, suicide was always there in my mind. I actually tried it twice, once by cutting and the other by overdosing on a certain medicine I was on, I "obviously" failed both, then a close friend sort of forced me to go to a psychologist, the thing that positively turned my life upside down, now I am still suffering, however, the difference is that I know deep down that I will be better, and my life will get better.

I have been living with bipolar depression for almost 25 years.... at the beginning it was like an earthquake inside and in my family... I was mentally destroyed and my family were shocked.... thanks to their patience and the support of my friends and AUB, where I work, I have survived. I got married and have 2 great children and I became a writer. I already wrote 2 poetry books and 3 novels and I am working on the 4th... The good side of bipolar depression is that it made me appreciate a healthy life more and come to understand the world and people around me better... I sometimes get surprised from people nagging all the time and they have all the blessing of a healthy mind.... I call upon all people with mental challenges not to give up; life is good and it is worth-living...a final tip: stay away from negative people, socialize and walk, walk, walk.

## Save the Date!

### Mental Health Act

**June 12<sup>th</sup> 6 – 8pm**

Join Legal Agenda in a discussion of the proposed Mental Health Care Law. Without a discussion with civil society a just law cannot be passed.

### Suicide Awareness Day

**Sep. 10<sup>th</sup>**

An awareness day that provides action to prevent suicides.

### Into the Dawn

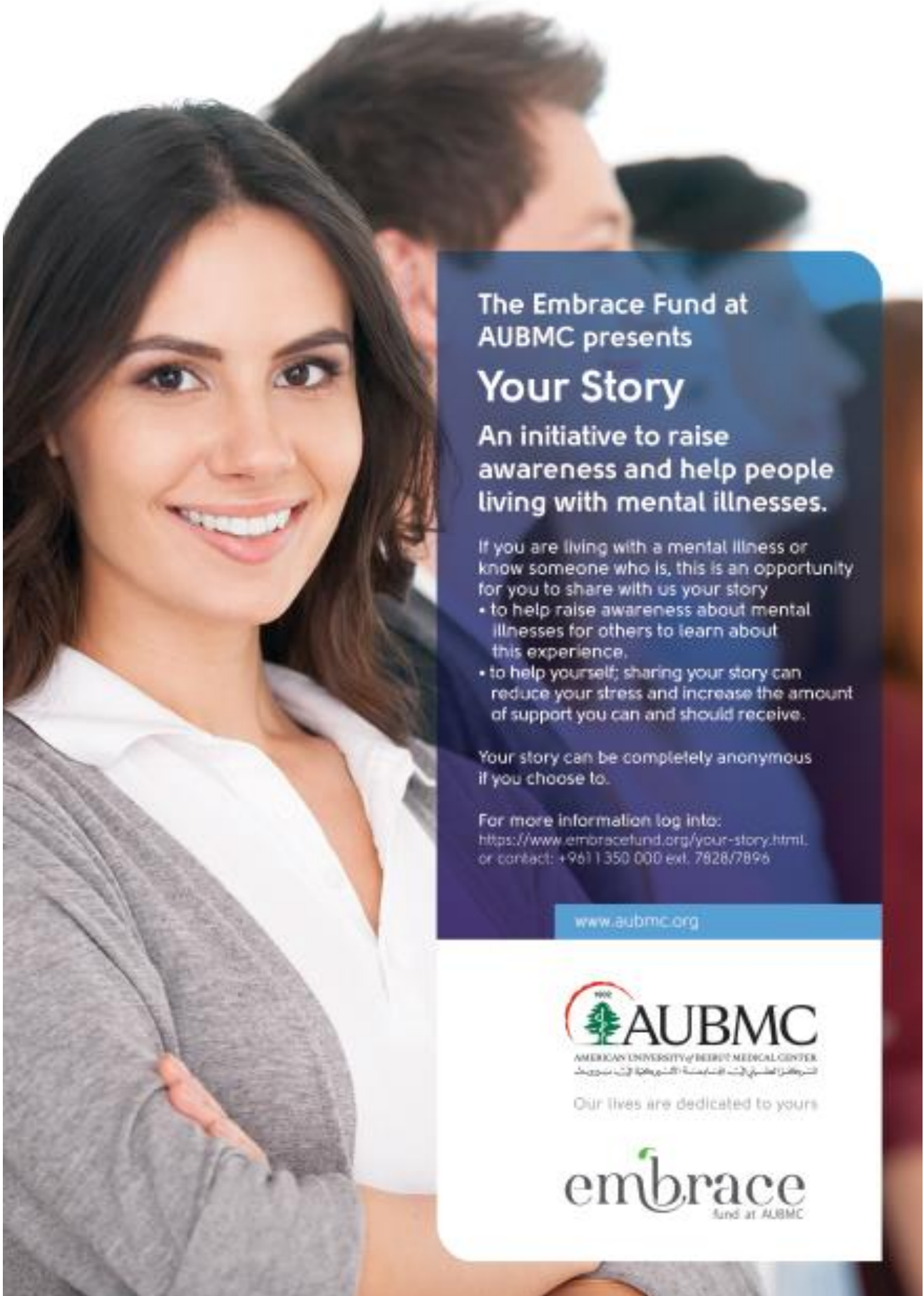
**Sep. 21st 5:45am**

A memorial walk to remember those we have lost to Suicide and to provide comfort to those of use who have lost a loved one to suicide.

### World Mental Health Day

**October 10<sup>th</sup>**

A day dedicated to raising awareness about mental health issues in Lebanon.



The Embrace Fund at  
AUBMC presents

## Your Story

An initiative to raise  
awareness and help people  
living with mental illnesses.

If you are living with a mental illness or  
know someone who is, this is an opportunity  
for you to share with us your story

- to help raise awareness about mental illnesses for others to learn about this experience.
- to help yourself; sharing your story can reduce your stress and increase the amount of support you can and should receive.

Your story can be completely anonymous  
if you choose to.

For more information log into:

<https://www.embracefund.org/your-story.html>  
or contact: +961 1 350 000 ext. 7828/7896

[www.aubmc.org](http://www.aubmc.org)



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT MEDICAL CENTER  
المركز الطبي في الجامعة اللبنانية الأمريكية

Our lives are dedicated to yours

embrace  
fund at AUBMC