

My name is Delilah Draper, and I am a 19 year old college freshman. My father also happens to be the Director of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. However, that is not really why I want to comment on this idea of a 3-digit number for mental health and suicidal crises.

I have had my own struggles with anxiety and depression for many years, and I have used the Lifeline service myself to get support. This proposed use of a 3-digit number means something important to me, because I knew about this service through my father, and it helped me. But what if I had not known about it? Everyone who needs to know 911 likely knows it...but not everyone knows the number to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. And the lives of many Americans may depend on knowing it, and remembering it in a moment of deepest despair.

Something else that is important to me is ending the shame and silence surrounding mental illness in this country. I believe that assigning a 3 digit number for mental health and suicidal crises will do more than anything else to erase the stigma against mental illness that denigrates, isolates and debilitates millions every year. How could a phone number have such a culture-wide impact?

*We have a 3 digit number for medical emergencies. If we had a 3 digit number for psychological emergencies, everyone would know that these emergencies are **real**. And these emergencies require a different type of skilled response, certainly different than a cop or ambulance showing up at your doorstep. This kind of response requires a caring person's voice, trained to listen, understand and help.*

Please assign a 3-digit number to help people to remember where to call when they are in a mental health or suicidal crisis...and to help them remember that they are not alone.