

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOST

BEFORE YOUR DISCUSSION

- Let your group know where they can find the book & film
- *Dear Evan Hansen* can be found at King's English Bookshop, your local library, etc.
- **Hope Lives** is available to stream on pbsutah.org/hopelives (60 min)

AFTER YOUR DISCUSSION

- Share your photos and ideas with others on the Facebook Group
- Invite your book club members to join the Facebook Group via email

ABOUT THIS BOX

The diverse and intimate stories that we see from both **Hope Lives: Preventing Teen Suicide** and *Dear Evan Hansen* address the sensitive yet pressing issue of teen suicide. Some of the key factors in assessing suicidal ideation in teens include feeling isolated, depressed, and alone. The documentary highlights the impact that students can have on each other when lifting each other up and focusing on prevention. *Dear Evan Hansen* hones in on one individual's experience to highlight the impact of what it is like to feel ostracized in a high school environment. We also come to recognize the impact of suicide on others, as well as its causes and prevention. Both the documentary and the book demonstrate the importance of what supportive classmates and friends can do, as well as how a supportive family can assist in preventing teen suicide and increasing the well-being of teens throughout Utah. The question becomes: What more can we be doing inside and outside of high schools to address teen suicide?

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GET INVOLVED!

You chose this box because you are interested in these stories and issues. If you were moved to learn more about how to support those who are struggling with today's pressures and learn more about mental health awareness in general, you can join those making a difference. Learn more by visiting these organizations' pages.

- **Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition**

utahsuicideprevention.org

- **Hope4Utah**

hope4utah.com

- **Encircle**

encircletogether.org

- **The Trevor Project**

thetrevorproject.org

- **NUHOPE Utah**

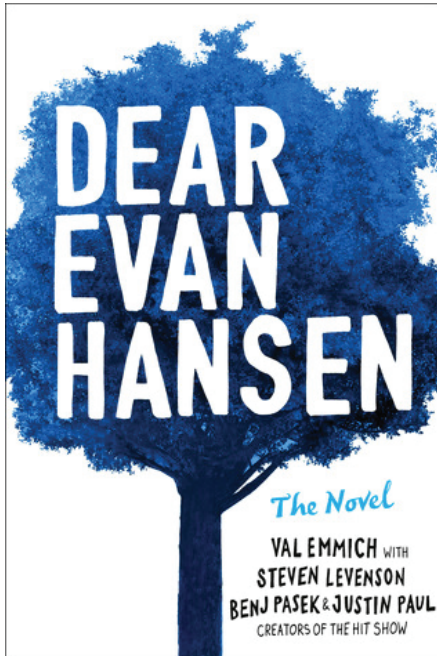
nuhopeutah.org

This project has received funding from Utah Humanities. Utah Humanities (UH) empowers groups and individuals to improve their communities through active engagement in the humanities.

ADDITIONAL READING

***The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want* by Sonja Lyubomirsky** Stories from Encircle, (available at encircletogether.org)

Real Queer America, by Samantha Allen



DEAR EVAN HANSEN

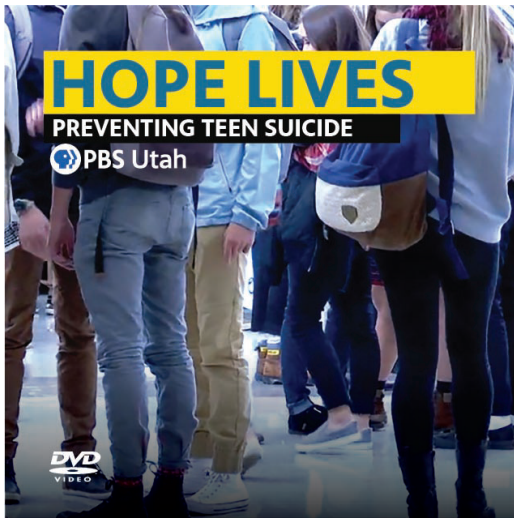
When a letter that was never meant to be seen draws high school senior Evan Hansen into a family's grief over the loss of their son, he is given the chance of a lifetime: to belong. He must stick to a lie he never meant to tell, that the notoriously troubled Connor Murphy was his secret best friend.

Suddenly, Evan isn't invisible anymore--even to the girl of his dreams. And Connor's parents, with their beautiful home on the other side of town, have taken him in like he was their own, desperate to know more about their enigmatic son from his closest friend. As Evan gets pulled deeper into their swirl of anger, regret, and confusion, he knows that what he's doing can't be right, but if he's helping people, how wrong can it be?

No longer tangled in his once — incapacitating anxiety, this new Evan has a purpose. And a website. He's confident. He's a viral phenomenon. Every day is amazing. Until everything is in danger of unraveling and he comes face to face with his greatest obstacle: himself. A simple lie leads to complicated truths in this big-hearted coming-of-age story of grief, authenticity and the struggle to belong in an age of instant connectivity and profound isolation.

VAL EMMICH *Author*

Val Emmich is a writer, singer-songwriter, and actor. He's released more than a dozen albums that you can stream right now if you're interested. The *Star-Ledger* very kindly called him "one of the finest songwriters in the Garden State, [and] also one of the most prolific." He's had roles on *Vinyl* (HBO), *30 Rock* (NBC), *The Big C* (Showtime) and *Ugly Betty* (ABC) and been featured in a bunch of commercials. His debut novel, *The Reminders*, was a Barnes & Noble Discover New Writers selection. His newest book, *Dear Evan Hansen: The Novel*, is a New York Times bestseller based on the hit Broadway show. He lives in Jersey City, New Jersey.



HOPE LIVES: PREVENTING TEEN SUICIDE

Utah's suicide rate has always been higher than that of the rest of the nation. Among teens ages 10 to 17, the suicide rate has tripled in less than a decade. On average two Utah teens attempt to end their lives every day. It can be easy to lose hope given the current trends showing rising rates of suicide in the state.

Hope Lives: Preventing Teen Suicide highlights three stories — a promising young athlete who took his own life when he wasn't admitted to the colleges he wanted; a young man now in his late 20s who talks candidly about his suicide attempt as a teen and the relief he felt when he survived; and a young trans-gender teen who survived her suicide attempt, which reaffirmed her desire to live. Their stories are intertwined with interviews with experts as well as the story of a peer Hope Squad at Lone Peak High School in Highland, Utah that has reduced suicide rates. Currently Hope4Utah has 180 hope squads in schools across the state with 5,000 school age students reaching out to help their peers every day. In addition, the program has 500 Hope Squad advisors who are most often school counselors and teachers.

FRANK FELDMAN *Filmmaker, Producer*

Frank Feldman is a local independent film producer and graduate of the University of Utah's Film Studies program. His last film for KUED '**A Changing Harvest**' looked at the disappearance of local family farms along the Wasatch Front. His work also includes 'Natural Family Values', which tells the story of one Utah town's attempt to define marriage for its residents, and 'Vapid Lovelies' which won the Spirit of Slamdance Award. Frank also produces and hosts "Thank God I'm Atheist" a weekly podcast on current events and politics.

1. There are many moments when Evan and those around him feel isolated, alone, and scared. How does his small family come together? Have you ever had moments where you have felt so isolated that you don't know where to turn? How do we see this portrayed in our society today?
2. Evans perception of himself, his mother, and the Murphy's shifts throughout the novel. How do you interpret this shift? Have you ever had an experience where your perception has shifted? In what ways is our current society shifting?
3. The Hope Squad at Lone Peak HS came together to help their community and also found that those efforts ended up helping themselves, too. How does reaching out to help others have a positive impact on everyone involved? What keeps us from reaching out to help others, and how do we overcome those concerns?
4. The Hope Squad and Hope4Utah have suggestions for how to reach out to people when you are concerned. What is wrong with opening a conversation with the phrase, "You're not suicidal, are you?" What does that implicitly communicate to the person in distress? Why would that make them less likely to open up to you?
5. Both Evan and Connor were hiding the pain they were experiencing and believed they were unworthy of love, decency, and value. How do you understand those characters? Have you had moments when you have felt similar? How can we, as a culture that genuinely cares about humanity, come together to promote love and unity in all forms, especially when our insecurities and negative emotions seem to overwhelm us?
6. In the film **Hope Lives**, David Davis felt acutely suicidal after some common and painful life experiences. What are some things to pay attention to as possible "red flags" for people who might be suicidal? (Being fired or being expelled from school, a recent unwanted move, loss of any major relationship, death of a spouse, child, or best friend, especially if by suicide. Diagnosis of a serious or terminal illness, sudden unexpected loss of freedom/fear of punishment, anticipated loss of financial security, fear of becoming a burden to others).
7. How would you try to talk to someone about your concern for them? What would it sound like to talk to a coworker? Spouse? Child? What would make it difficult to have this conversation?
8. Ask your group to vote whether these statements are true or false:
 - a. Confronting someone will only make them upset and more likely to commit suicide.
 - b. Once someone begins thinking about suicide, their eventual suicide is inevitable.
 - c. Truly suicidal people never talk about their suicidal thoughts.

All of the above statements are false.

- (a) Asking a person directly about their suicidal thoughts lowers anxiety, opens up lines of communication and lowers the risk that they will act impulsively. A sincere expression of caring and concern – even if misplaced – is rarely if ever met with anger.
- (b) Suicide is not a once-made decision — it is often a process and a journey of negative thoughts and hopeless emotions. Suicide is the most-preventable form of death; any intervention in that journey can help the person move away from committing suicide permanently.
- (c) Research shows that between 60% and 90% of all those who attempt suicide communicate their intent to do so. These communications range from indirect statements ("I'm just a burden on everyone") to more explicit verbalizations ("I wish I was dead"). Often you will see communications increase in the week prior to an attempt.

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DR. JARED KLUNDT

Jared Klundt, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist, researcher, and educator. A former clinical faculty member at Brigham Young University, Jared's research and clinical practice has focused on the intersection of mental health, sexuality, and religiosity. His applied positive psychology class was listed as one of the "Six Must-Take Elective Classes at BYU" and demonstrated statistically significant positive change in the mental health of the students who took the class. Jared is currently the Clinical Director at Encircle, where he is focused on helping reduce suicidality and improve mental health among sexual and gender minorities — one of the most at-risk populations in the state.

Recipe courtesy of “In Defense of Food” which premiered on PBS on December 30, 2015.

The Connor Murphy Memorial Orchard (from *Dear Evan Hansen*) was an apple orchard. Apples make for delicious American desserts commonly associated with family gatherings and togetherness. This particular recipe is easy, painless, and allows more time for conversations with the ones you love!

FOR THE FILLING

- 4 pounds apples (8 or 9, assorted varieties), peeled, cored, and cut into ½-inch slices
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon finely grated fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca or all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Set a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. **For the Filling:** Place the apples in a large bowl. Add the sugar, lemon juice, spices, tapioca, and salt and gently toss to combine. Spoon the filling into an ungreased 9-inch round, 2-inch-deep pie dish or an 11-inch oval, 2-inch-deep pie dish.
3. **For the Crumble Topping:** Whisk together the dry ingredients. Add the butter and, working with your fingertips, a fork, or a pastry blender, combine the mixture until the crumbs are pea-size.
4. Spoon the topping evenly, but thickly, over the fruit filling.
5. Place the baking pan on a baking sheet or sheet of foil (this will catch any spills) on the middle rack of the oven. Bake until the fruit is bubbling and the top is nicely browned, about 1 hour. To ensure even baking, rotate the baking dish half-way through. (If the top begins to get too brown, cover it with a sheet of foil.)
6. Serve warm.

FOR THE CRUMBLE TOPPING

- 1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ¼ cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 ¼ cups firmly packed dark brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ 12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) unsalted cold butter, cut into small cubes

