



Impact SPOTLIGHT

November 2025, Issue 5

Encouraging Dialogue to Prevent Suicide – The Impact of the “Talk Away the Dark” Campaign

The Challenge

Suicide rates in the U.S. are at a 40-year high, and while we have made great strides as a society in talking about mental health, people are often still hesitant to talk directly about suicide. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s (AFSP) [“Talk Away the Dark”](#) campaign aims to save lives by encouraging people to have honest and open conversations about mental health, and to ask directly about suicide when struggles persist. The campaign features a [film](#), conversation guides on mental health and help seeking, and other resources with a central message: One critically important step all people can take is starting the conversation.

[Visit the campaign website](#) to learn more about #TalkAwayTheDark.

Measuring impact – by collecting and leveraging data in strategic and thoughtful ways – plays a critical role in ensuring that we achieve real results with the actions we take, programs we produce, and partnerships and initiatives we embark on in our quest to prevent suicide and provide support to those affected.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s Impact Spotlight series takes a look at some of the ways we’re making a true difference in communities everywhere.



Key Takeaways

1. The campaign reached over 243 million people through a multi-pronged campaign strategy including public relations, social media, TV, radio, advertising and out-of-home marketing, and influencer and partner engagement.
2. Most viewers liked or loved the campaign, citing its message that it’s never too late to reach out.
3. After the campaign launch, people are more likely to reach out and start a conversation with someone in their life who may be having suicidal thoughts.

Taking Action

Developed in consultation with leading research expert Dr. Madelyn Gould and an advisory group, and produced in partnership with TBWA\Chiat\Day New York, “Talk Away the Dark” is a holistic, multimedia, [award-winning](#) campaign depicting a daughter having brave conversations with her father after recognizing a series of common warning signs of suicide risk.

Together with our partners at Connect360 and Whitman Insight Strategies (WINS), we evaluated the reach and impact of the campaign during its first year (May 2023 through August 2024) to help us determine if we:

- Reached a broader public audience
- Reduced the negative connotation with the word “suicide”
- Encouraged people to talk about mental health and ask their loved ones directly about suicide.

Who Was Involved

The campaign’s [public service ad](#) (PSA) reached hundreds of millions of people across the country through innovative and multi-pronged outreach, partnership, and collaboration strategies.



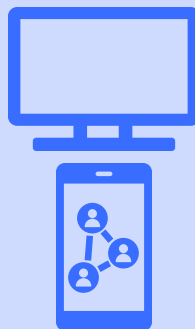
Outreach and partnerships helped to secure **donated media**, including Audacy, TikTok, YouTube, Meta, Reddit, ESPN, Fox, A&E, AMC, and Paramount.



Celebrity and influencer collaborations included Lifesaver Ambassadors Tefi Pessoa and Juan Acosta, as well as actor Mark Duplass, comedian Gary Gulman, and rock band Papa Roach.



79%
of those surveyed liked the ad
(N=500)



217.8 Million

impressions from 38,000 airings across TV outlets

26 Million

impressions across all social media channels (e.g., TikTok)

Note: ‘N’ refers to the total number of people who responded to that particular question.

What We Found



In our evaluation, we found the Talk Away the Dark message was positively received by multiple audiences, and that perceptions and attitudes toward suicide improved among key communities.

Positive Reception

The PSA was well-received because it encourages people to have open dialogue about suicidal thoughts.



"It did not preach, and it did not shame. It simply showed two family members communicating and, ultimately, facing some harsh truths that need to be talked about." - Evaluation participant

Changed Attitudes

After seeing the film, people are more likely to reach out and start a conversation with someone.



"It shows the daughter not being aware of her dad's mental state at first but then when things start adding up, she takes a positive step. It is encouraging because it shows that signs can start earlier than we see but it's not too late to say something." - Evaluation participant



Likelihood to reach out to support someone when recognizing suicide warning signs **increased by 7%** among all groups (N=500).



Attitudes shifted after the ad campaign with a **31% increase** in people believing that "asking someone if they're thinking of suicide won't give them the idea of taking their life" (N=500).



Rock band **Papa Roach's** ballad, "Leave a Light On (Talk Away the Dark)" went to #1 on the charts after the band highlighted the campaign through its [music video](#), two world tours, and a [duet with Carrie Underwood](#).

What Comes Next

With these key learnings, we are continuing to shift the cultural narrative around suicide by:

1. Maintaining and scaling partnerships with media, influencers, and creators to shape the public conversation about suicide, including in-kind placements of the PSA in partnership with Warner Bros Discovery,
2. Developing #RealConvo guides to support communities who are impacted by suicide with deeper content for engaging with others, and
3. Supporting public education and understanding of suicide through storytelling and other cultural moments.