

How to Talk Safely About Suicide

Thank you for being willing to share your story and speak publicly about suicide and mental health. As an influencer or content creator, you have the power to send the message that we all have mental health, that no one is alone, and that help is available.

Here are some research-based safe messaging guidelines to help you speak safely about this important topic, along with some technical considerations to follow:

1. Your story should not simply express pain. The opportunity is to educate and inspire hope.
2. If talking about a suicide or a suicide attempt, do not include details about lethal means or the method used, which research shows can be triggering for those who may be struggling, and may cause contagion.
3. Rather than focusing solely on a moment of pain, such as a suicide loss or the story of an attempt, emphasize the journey. Include the full range of your experience, both the positive and the negative, how far you've come, and how you or someone you care about successfully manages their mental health today.
4. Don't say that a suicide death or attempt was "caused" by a single event, such as a job loss or divorce. Research shows no one takes their life for one single reason. What leads to a suicide attempt is a combination of risk factors that often includes a (treatable) mental health condition. You can look up other risk factors and warning signs at afsp.org/signs.
5. Avoid sharing details about the location of a suicide death or notes left behind, which can unintentionally glamorize suicide, or indicate that suicide is a way of sending a message to others.
6. Avoid using the word "committed," which perpetuates the stigma of suicide as a crime and indicates moral judgment. Instead, say "died by suicide," "took his/her life," or, "ended one's life."
7. Do not refer to a suicide attempt as "successful," "unsuccessful" or as a "failed attempt."
8. Suicide should never be portrayed as honorable or romantic, or as a reasonable option for someone in pain.
9. Therapy and/or medication have been proven to help some people managing a mental health condition. Please avoid discouraging the use of medication, or perpetuating the dangerous myth that it will change or suppress one's personality.
10. Emphasize that help is always available, and that recovery is possible. Mental health is something that can be managed, just like physical health. Suicide is preventable. Let people know they are not alone.

Provide mental health resources:

"If you are in crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988, or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741. You can learn more about suicide from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at afsp.org."

**Visit our Safe Storytelling
Studio for additional
guidance and resources.**

