TALK SAVES LIVES™
An Introduction to Suicide Prevention

afsp.org/TalkSavesLives
Suicide is a health issue.
Suicide can be prevented.
Scope of the Problem
Research
Prevention
What You Can Do
How we talk about suicide matters.
Language Do’s and Don’ts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Say</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Committed suicide”</td>
<td>“Died by suicide”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Ended his/her life”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Killed himself/herself”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Failed” or “successful” attempt</td>
<td>“Suicide attempt” or “death by suicide”</td>
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</tbody>
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Scope of the Problem
Over 800,000 people die by suicide each year.
Someone dies by suicide every 40 seconds.
In the U.S. suicide is the 10th leading cause of death.

In 2017: 47,173 people died by suicide.
For every suicide...

25 others attempt.
Suicide impacts individuals and communities.
Suicide has an economic impact. $69 billion per year in the United States.
Why do people take their own lives? There is no single cause, but rather multiple intersecting factors.
The large majority of people who die by suicide have a mental health condition contributing to their death.
1 in 4 people will experience a mental health condition, and most do not go on to die by suicide.
Physical Differences

The brains of people who die by suicide **differ** from those who die from other causes in both **structure** and **function**.
Most people who are suicidal are ambivalent about taking their life.
The Perspective of a Suicidal Person

- **Crisis** point has been reached
- Desperate to escape **pain**
- Thinking becomes **limited**
Who is at risk?
Risk Factors

- Health
- Historical
- Environmental
Health Factors

Mental health conditions:

- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Eating disorders
- Personality disorders
- Psychosis
- PTSD
- Substance use disorders
Other Health Factors

- Serious or chronic health conditions
- Chronic pain
- Serious head injuries
Historical Factors

- Family history of suicide
- Family history of mental health conditions
- Childhood abuse
- Previous suicide attempts
Environmental Factors

• Access to lethal means
• Exposure/contagion
• Prolonged stress
• Stressful life event
What others see:

What they may not know:

- Genetic risk
- Depression
- Prolonged stress at work
- Drinking more than usual
The Importance of Research

- Biomarkers
- Interventions
- Psychotherapies
- Medication
Protective Factors

- Mental health care
- Family and community support
- Problem-solving skills
- Cultural and religious beliefs
Mental health care is an important ingredient for preventing suicide.
The problem: only 2 in 5 with a mental health condition seek treatment

We need a culture where everyone knows to be smart about mental health.
Being Proactive About Mental Health

Make mental health a priority.

- See a doctor or mental health professional
- Get an evaluation
- Discuss treatment options
- Find what works best for the individual
The law requires insurance plans to cover mental health services the same as physical health services.
Self Care Strengthens Mental Health

Exercise

Healthy diet

Sleep

Stress management
Support for loss survivors and those with lived experience.
The most important thing you can put between a suicidal person and their way of ending their life is **time.**
Limiting access to means prevents suicide.
Limiting Access to Means

- CO sensors in cars
- Barriers on bridges
- Blister packaging for medication
- Secure firearms
What You Can Do
Have a Conversation
Watch for the warning signs

Reach out

Seek help
Suicide Warning Signs

Talk  Behavior  Mood
Talk

- Ending their lives
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain
Behavior

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Issues with sleep
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Looking for a way to kill themselves
- Giving away possessions
Mood

- Depression
- Apathy
- Rage
- Irritability

- Impulsivity
- Humiliation
- Anxiety
Trust your gut.
Assume you’re the only one who is going to reach out.
How to Reach Out

• Talk to them in **private**
• **Listen** to their story
• Express **concern** and **caring**
• **Ask directly** about suicidal thoughts
  – Are you thinking of ending your life?
• Encourage them to **seek mental health services**
Avoid minimizing their feelings.

Avoid trying to convince them life is worth living.

Avoid advice to fix it.
If you think they might make an attempt soon.

**Stay** with them

Help them **secure** or remove **lethal means**

**Escort** them to mental health services
Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Call 1-800-273-TALK
Crisis Text Line
Text TALK to 741741
For Emergencies
Call 911
We can create a culture that’s **smart** about **mental health** and suicide prevention.
TALK SAVES LIVES
Help us improve our program by completing the feedback form.

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