

MESSAGING MATTERS

Tips for Safe and Effective Messaging on Suicide Prevention



1. PROVIDE A SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE

- Describe the resources you are offering, and what to expect

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or thinking about suicide:

Call 650-579-0350 (San Mateo County Crisis Line)

Call/Text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)

2. EDUCATE THE AUDIENCE ABOUT WARNING SIGNS AND RISK FACTORS

- Include information about warning signs and life circumstances that can increase risk (risk factors).
- Visit www.suicideispreventable.org for a list of warning signs.

3. ACKNOWLEDGE THE COMPLEXITY OF SUICIDE - AVOID OVERSIMPLIFYING

- Avoid suggesting that any one event, stressor, or circumstance “caused” a suicide attempt or death.
- Avoid speculating about motives. While it’s natural to want to understand why, we usually do not have a complete picture of the many factors involved.

4. AVOID DISCUSSING DETAILS ABOUT THE METHOD OF SUICIDE

- Avoid details that describe the suicide including weapon/method used, the specific location, and the location of the wound.

5. AVOID SENSATIONAL LANGUAGE AND IMAGES

- Use language like “die by suicide” instead of “commit suicide” or “successful suicide.” Avoid terms that imply blame, judgment, or success/failure.
- Avoid presenting statistics in a way that makes suicide seem common or inevitable.
- When sharing data, highlight help-seeking and prevention, such as local crisis line calls
- Choose images that convey hope, connection, and support. Avoid graphic or distressing images of suffering.

6. HELPFUL RESOURCES

Reporting on Suicide - for the news media

www.ReportingOnSuicide.org

Framework for Successful Messaging - for background

www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org



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SMCHealth.org/SuicidePrevention

