Turning great science into effective injury and violence prevention. It’s what we do.
Overview

• Shared language
• Awareness vs. action
• Framework for successful messaging
• Mass media
• Evaluation
Take care.

• We will be discussing ways to practice safe messaging for suicide prevention.
• This presentation will include discussion and examples of unsafe messaging that may be difficult to see.
• Please take care of yourself. Step away for a moment if you need to.
Keep in mind...

• Every time you talk about suicide, you’re talking to people who have been personally affected.
  • Loss survivors
  • Attempt survivors
  • People who have thoughts of suicide
• Every “data point” we talk about is a human being who left loved ones behind.
Common Terms & Shared Language

- Best practices
- Comprehensive suicide prevention
- Connectedness
- Cluster
- Contagion
- Evidence-based practices
- Gatekeepers
- Ideation
- Intervention
- (Lethal) Means
- Means safety
- Non-suicidal self injury
- Postvention
- Protective factors
- Risk factors
- Suicidality
Mental Health Conditions & Suicide

• Having a mental health condition can increase risk, but it is only one risk factor of many.

• *Most individuals with a mental health condition do not die by suicide.*

• We cannot focus only on treating mental health conditions as the way to prevent suicide.
First things first...

• What is your WHY?
• What are you trying to achieve with your message?
• Awareness vs. action
Awareness vs. Action

• “Public opinion surveys show strong public awareness and support for suicide prevention, but reveal gaps in knowing how to take action.”

• Generally the “awareness” box is checked, but what do we want people to do after they’re aware of the problem?
Filling the Gaps

• Surveys show people are generally aware of these points:
  • Suicide is a problem
  • Mental health is important
  • Investing in suicide prevention is important
  • Everyone should play a role in prevention

https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/framework/background-research/public-opinion
Messaging Opportunities

• Consider the following points from a 2015 Harris public opinion poll about suicide.
• How can your team address these concerns?
Messing Opportunity #1

- Lack of access to affordable help is perceived as an obstacle that prevents people thinking about suicide from seeking help:
  - 68% think that those contemplating suicide don’t know how to get help
  - 62% think people can’t afford treatment
  - 53% believe there is a lack of access to treatment

https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/framework/background-research/public-opinion
Messaging Opportunity #2

• 45% cited barriers that might stop them from trying to help someone close to them who was thinking about suicide, including:
  • Fear that they would make it worse (24%)
  • Not knowing what to say or do (23%)
  • Fearing there may be nothing they could do to help (18%)

https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/framework/background-research/public-opinion
Messaging Opportunity #3

• Who would you talk to if you’re in crisis?
  • Approx. 66% said that they would tell someone if they were experiencing suicidal thoughts
  • 17% said they aren’t sure who they would talk to
  • 13% said they would tell no one

• Men are more likely to say they would tell no one.
Consider:

• What resources or treatment options are available?
• Are there affordable treatment options?
• What do I say/do to help someone who’s thinking of suicide?
• Is it hopeless to try?
• Who can I talk to? Who can I refer someone to?
Crafting Your Message
Framework for Successful Messaging

• Four elements:
  • Strategy
  • Safety
  • Positive Narrative
  • Guidelines
Messaging Strategy

• Building your strategy by answering these questions:
  • What are you trying to communicate?
  • Who is your intended audience?
  • What resources are you including?
  • What is your call to action? What action step(s) are you sharing?
Crafting a Positive Narrative

• Concrete, realistic actions your audience can take
• Examples of effective prevention
• Personal stories of resilience and recovery
  • Do this safely and only when ready.
• Effective treatments and where to find them
• Programs or services your agency provides
Safe Messaging 101

• Communicate a “positive narrative”
• Messages around suicide should promote help-seeking, resources, hope, support, resilience, and recovery.
• Essential messages:
  • Suicide is preventable.
  • Effective programs and services exist.
  • Help is available.
  • Resilience and recovery are possible.
Avoid Sharing Unsafe Content

• Unhelpful and/or unsafe content can include:
  • Details of suicide method or location
  • Portraying suicide as a common or reasonable reaction to adversity
  • Glamorizing suicide
  • Sensational language (e.g. “suicide epidemic” or “suicide rates skyrocketing”)
  • Providing simplistic explanations for suicide
  • Sharing personal details that cause identification with the decedent
  • Dark or alarming images (“head clatchers”)
  • Extensive statistics about the problem without providing action steps
Follow Guidelines

• Follow guidelines for safe messaging!
  • Framework for Successful Messaging
  • Reporting on Suicide
  • Many, many others available here: https://www.suicidepreventionmessaging.org/guidelines
Language Tips

Avoid saying...
• Committed suicide
• Failed suicide attempt
• Successful suicide attempt

Try this instead...
• Died by suicide, killed him/herself
• Suicide attempt or nonfatal suicide attempt
• Suicide
When Promoting Your Events

• Emphasize key messages of hope and help-seeking/offering
• Do not use unsafe content
  • Be careful with stock photos!!!
  • Stay away from dark images (“head clutches”)  
• Avoid using sensational language
  • “Skyrocketing” or “epidemic”
• Include resources like 988
• Include action steps
  • “Join us for a Talk Saves Lives training to learn how you can help!”
  • “Share 988 with your friends!”
Examples

• The following images are taken from real flyers or posts to promote a suicide prevention event or training.
• Considering what we’ve discussed, which of these follow safe messaging guidelines?
PREVENTING A CRISIS
STRAIGHT TALK ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & SUICIDE
Wed., December 15, 2021
6-8:00 p.m.

Due to recent deaths by suicide among our Canyon County students, we need to have a serious conversation with parents and guardians about youth mental health including anxiety, depression, and suicide. The adults-only conversation will highlight prevention and intervention resources and strategies.

ADULTS ONLY - PLEASE JOIN US
A parent's story of loss and hope

Youth Suicide
The Silent Epidemic

SPEAK UP
REACH OUT
LISTEN

The best way to minimize the risk of suicide is to know the risk factors and to recognize the warning signs. Take them seriously, listen. Know how to respond to them. It could save someone’s life.

GET HELP

• To an Emergency, don't hesitate, call 911
• NEVER leave a suicidal person alone - BE A FRIEND

Have the person seek help through a mental health professional: a psychologist, psychiatrist, mental health counselor or family therapist, psychologist, nurse, or counselor.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Week is September 4-10

10 THINGS TO LOOK FOR:
- Frequent visits to the school nurse or seeing paramedics/emergency responders in school
- Self-injury, withdrawal from activities
- Declining grades, poor attendance
- Sudden change in behavior
- Changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Talking about death and how they would kill themselves
- Writing stories about death
- Withdrawal from activities
- Changes in behavior
- Changes in sleep patterns

SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Research shows that people having suicidal thoughts feel relief when they share their pains and are understood. Join me in helping to prevent suicide today, and if you’re worried about someone, try asking directly if they’re suicidal, it could save a life.

COMMON SIGNS OF SUICIDAL THOUGHTS
- Focusing on or talking about death and dying
- Having significant mood swings and/or alternating distress
- Making plans, including updating one’s will, giving away possessions, providing wanted evidence such as自杀 notes

Suicide Prevention & Awareness Day

"Building a Culture of Safety and Hope"

June 16, 2018
4:30-6:00PM

Facilitator:

TOPICS:
Risk factors, warning signs, statistics, suicidal ideation, elevated risk factors, behavioral and verbal cues, APP (Question, Persuade and Refer)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK

PRESENTS...

SUICIDE PREVENTION & AWARENESS DAY
Bold Moves
AGAINST SUICIDE
LOUISVILLE

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK
SEPTEMBER 8-15
Be a part of a FREE community-wide training event to end suicide in Louisville.

Suicide Prevention
A Resource for Parents

The QPR Training Course teaches the warning signs of suicide, how to begin a conversation, and how to refer to help.

To participate, visit: QPRLOU.COM

Hermiston School District Families
join our Mental Health Series focusing on... What Parents need to know about Suicide Prevention
January 9, 2024
6:30-7:30PM via Zoom

• View in person at Rocky Heights Elementary (doors open at 5:45PM)
• Dinner for the first 50 attendees.
• Childcare available.
• Door prize at the in-person viewing.
• Representatives from CARE & HPD available for questions.

SUICIDE PREVENTION
It’s OK to Ask.
Depression is not a normal part of aging. Reach out to a loved one if you are struggling. Talking saves lives.

Learn warning signs and get tips on how to start a conversation. Visit afs.org
Crisis Lifeline: Dial/Text 9-8-8
Or chat online at 988lifeline.org

Suicide prevention... It does work.

Veterans Leadership Committee
Veterans have one of the highest rates of suicide in Colorado. Join our work group - share your ideas and experiences as we work to reduce suicide in Northern Colorado.

Objectives:
• Identify gaps in mental health care and support services already in place.
• Develop and implement concrete action steps based on your recommendations.
• Provide support in areas that matter to you.

Quarterly Meeting Schedule
12:00PM - 1:00PM
March 25, 2021
June 24, 2021
September 23, 2021
December 16, 2021

Contact: Marshall Spring
Marshall@suicideprevent.org
Zoom ID: 885 0337 8213
Mass Media
Media Messaging Matters!
Media Messaging

• *Safe reporting can reduce risk of contagion.*
  
  • Work with your local media outlets to share resources for safe messaging and explain the importance of safe messaging to prevent suicide

• Opportunity for sharing resources and a hopeful message

• [Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide](#)
Which side is a better example of safe messaging?

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention’s Framework for Successful Messaging
Evaluation
Evaluating our Communications

• How do we define effectiveness?
• Why would we track effectiveness of communication materials?
• How do we track communication materials?
Effectiveness

• Defined by program and communication goals
  • If desired outcome is reach, then effectiveness is defined by adequate/inadequate reach of material.
  • If desired outcome is knowledge, then effectiveness is defined by amount of knowledge gained from the material.

• Establish measurable constructs to determine effectiveness of communication materials
Why evaluate effectiveness?

• By evaluating the effectiveness of communication materials:
  • Provide insight to achieving communication related goals
  • Allows for quality improvement of content
  • Better understand the impact of messaging
• If you don’t ask the questions, you won't know the answers
Ways to Monitor Effectiveness

• Be sure measurement tools matches the construct
  • Ex. Measure reach with number of clicks, interactions, retweets, or downloads.
  • Ex. Measure reception of messaging with a focus group or interview with member of target population.
  • Ex. Measure knowledge gained from communication with a follow up survey.

• Create measurable evaluation indicators and corresponding tools for communication materials
Resources
Don’t recreate the wheel!

• Use customizable shareables and approved messaging from reputable organizations like AFSP or SAMHSA
Resources

• The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Framework for Successful Messaging

• https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/
Resources

• American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

• Social media messages: https://afsp.org/social-media-messages/

• Social media shareable graphics: https://afsp.org/social-shareables/
Resources

• 988 Toolkit
• You can download materials OR order *free* materials shipped to you
• Filter by language, audience, type of material, etc.
• [https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/988](https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/988)
Resources

• How to Communicate and Write about Veteran Suicide (Published by the VA)

Resources

• Guidance for sharing your personal story about suicide (from the AFSP)
  • https://afsp.org/sharingyourstory/#safe-storytelling-guidelines
Thank you!

• We’re so glad you joined us today.
• Contacts:
  • Megan Lueck: mlueck@unc.edu
  • Jane Ann Miller: jane.miller@dhhs.nc.gov