



Phone: 732-235-2810
E-mail: tlc@ubhc.rutgers.edu

Suicide Postvention Talking Points

Use when there is permission from the family to speak openly about the cause of death.

After a suicide, people often benefit from hearing important reminders about reactions and resiliency. The following talking points may be helpful to incorporate into a faculty meeting or be generally referenced as your organization begins to navigate following this tragic loss. The benefit from speaking from these talking points is that you will help to identify yourself as a trusted resource within your community and increase the chances that someone who is struggling would come to you for support.

- Losing a peer to suicide can be very confusing and upsetting and we want to be sure that you all know there is help available during this time.
- Not everyone had the same reaction when they heard about _____'s suicide because not everyone has had the same relationship with him. Some people may be very upset because they knew _____ well. Some may not have known _____ at all and still have strong reactions.
- There may be some of you that didn't know him but may have other stresses in your life, or may have had a loved die, and your feelings may be extra sensitive right now.
- Everyone reacts differently to the news of a death, especially one by suicide and we need to refrain from judging a person's way of reacting.
- After the suicide of a peer, it can feel like the whole world has turned upside down and nothing makes sense. It can feel like things will never be the same again.
- Some people feel numb and just can't believe it is true.
- Our bodies can react when we hear shocking and upsetting news (heart racing, feeling nervous, can't get disturbing thoughts out of your head, can't concentrate, can't sleep well, don't feel like eating, wanting to be alone, feeling down, and more).
- While these feelings are normal in these first days and weeks after a death, it is important to talk to a trusted adult if you or a friend are noticing that some of these feelings are strong or are not going away.



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- The next few days and weeks may be very difficult, and the counselors are here to talk with you. We want you to know that you are not alone in dealing with _____'s death or any other difficulties in your life.

Suicide Talking Points

- We want to take some time to talk about suicide because accurate information can help prevent it.
- Suicide can be confusing. It is hard to understand why someone would take their own life.
- Suicide is not the result of stress or getting a bad grade, having a fight with your family or breaking up with someone. It is much more complicated. While these things may have been happening, they don't tell the whole story.
- Most people who have experienced many bad things or carry lots of stress don't go on to take their lives, so we know something else is happening in the brain of someone who dies by suicide.
- Research tells us that over 90% of people that die by suicide have a mental health disorder at the time of their death, usually something like depression or even a drug or alcohol problem. Sometimes people who have depression or other problems use drugs and alcohol to feel better and help them cope. What often happens is the drugs and alcohol become another problem. These disorders can cause symptoms that can make a person feel very sad, and hopeless. The symptoms kind of hijack the brain and make the person believe they will never feel better again.
- Sometimes a person can do a good job of hiding their symptoms and even their family and closest friends don't know how much they are struggling.
- Depression and other mental health problems can trick the brain into believing that there is no other way out of this deep psychological pain, or no other way to solve a problem.
- It is important for you to know there are very good treatments for these mental health problems. Counseling and even medicine can help relieve the symptoms and the person can recover and be well again.
- We want you to be very clear that suicide is not a way to solve a mental health or other problem. Suicide is a forever decision that cannot be reversed.



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- It is important to reach out to a trusted adult if you or a friend is experiencing some of the thoughts and feelings we have described because there is help available.
- I would like you to think for a moment “Who are the trusted adults in your life? Who are the trusted adults in this school that you would go to if you or a friend were having a really difficult time and maybe even having thoughts of suicide?”
- The next few days and weeks may be difficult for some of you. What are some things that help you to get through difficult times? (See if you can generate some ideas from the group – if not talk about some things that have helped others including spending time with friends, talking, listening to music, watching TV or movies, getting immersed in a sport, drawing, playing an instrument, dancing, praying, sleeping, and more).
- When people are going through hard times, it is important to get good sleep, eat healthy foods even if you don’t feel like eating, drink lots of water to pee out the built-up stress chemicals in your body, and engage in healthy activities.

Crisis Supports

A crisis line is a service that provides free, confidential support and resources for people in emotional distress. The service is provided by a trained crisis counselor on the phone and in some cases by text and/or chat. You can call or text for help with someone you’re worried about or for yourself. In addition to the resources listed below, some states have their own crisis lines with phone, text, and/or chat services.

- **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741-741
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988. Chat available at 988lifeline.org
- **2NDFLOOR:** The Youth Helpline of New Jersey. Call or text 888-222-2228
- **The Trevor Project:** Text START to 678-678 or call 1-866-488-7386
- **Prevent Suicide New Jersey:** Resources are available at preventsuicidenj.org