

# Tips for Talking about Suicide

Suicide is a difficult topic for most people to talk about. This tool suggests ways to talk about key issues that may come up when someone dies by suicide.

<p><b>Give accurate information about suicide.</b></p> <p>Suicide is a complicated behavior. It is not caused by a single event.</p> <p>In many cases, mental health conditions, such as depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD, or psychosis, or a substance use disorder are present leading up to a suicide. Mental health conditions affect how people feel and prevent them from thinking clearly. Having a mental health problem is actually common and nothing to be ashamed of. Help is available.</p> <p>Talking about suicide in a calm, straightforward way does not put the idea into people's minds.</p>	<p><b>By saying...</b></p> <p>"The cause of <b>[NAME]</b>'s death was suicide. Suicide is not caused by a single event. In many cases, the person has a mental health or substance use disorder and then other life issues occur at the same time leading to overwhelming mental and/or physical pain, distress, and hopelessness."</p> <p>"There are effective treatments to help people with mental health or substance abuse problems or who are having suicidal thoughts."</p> <p>"Mental health problems are not something to be ashamed of. They are a type of health issue."</p>
<p><b>Address blaming and scapegoating.</b></p> <p>It is common to try to answer the question "why?" after a suicide death. Sometimes this turns into blaming others for the death.</p>	<p><b>By saying...</b></p> <p>"Blaming others or the person who died does not consider the fact that the person was experiencing a lot of distress and pain. Blaming is not fair and can hurt another person deeply."</p>
<p><b>Do not focus on the method.</b></p> <p>Talking in detail about the method can create images that are upsetting and can increase the risk of imitative behavior by vulnerable individuals.</p> <p>The focus should not be on how someone killed themselves but rather on how to cope with feelings of sadness, loss, anger, etc.</p>	<p><b>By saying...</b></p> <p>"Let's talk about how <b>[NAME]</b>'s death has affected you and ways you can handle it."</p> <p>"How can you deal with your loss and grief?"</p>
<p><b>Address anger.</b></p> <p>Accept expressions of anger at the deceased and explain that these feelings are normal.</p>	<p><b>By saying...</b></p> <p>"It is okay to feel angry. These feelings are normal, and it doesn't mean that you didn't care about <b>[NAME]</b>. You can be angry at someone's behavior and still care deeply about that person."</p>