

ADVISORY OCTOBER 24, 2006
Suicide Prevention

Assets: Caring School Climate, Safety, Positive Peer Influence, Caring, Integrity, Responsibility, Personal Power, Self Esteem, Sense of Purpose and Positive View of Personal Future.

Objectives: Advisee's will walk away with information related to suicide prevention; understand how to help a friend in need (Friends Tell); how to recognize warning signs; dispel myths of suicide

Materials: Suicide prevention Pre-test; Crisis hotline cards; FAQ sheet; Video broadcast

Format:

- I. Introduction – October is Suicide Prevention Month. Today's advisory will present information to you about understanding and preventing suicide. We understand that suicide is often a difficult topic of discussion. Therefore, many myths have been developed. However, it is important to know the truth. The truth is that there is help and hope for those in need. The truth is that we never want to believe that it can happen to us. The truth is that most people who have attempted suicide gave warning signs. We will first do a pre-test to find out what you already know about suicide. A short video will be broadcast and then we will have time to discuss the video, the answers to the pre-test, and any feelings you may have.
- II. Pre-test – Distribute the pre-test to students and ask them to work on it for about 2 minutes by themselves or you can assign small groups. This is only for their information – they will not be collected. After students have had a chance to complete the pre-test, the video will be shown. See if there are any questions students may have if they complete or refuse to complete the pre-test.
- III. Video – The video is approximately 7 minutes in length. The media center will let you know when to turn on your televisions and what station to turn to. The video will be broadcast throughout the school.
- IV. Discussion Questions/Processing after the video – may be done in small groups or as a whole group but please *do not let a student sit alone*.
 1. **First** debrief with the whole group to see where kids are at. Ask them what was their reaction to the video and how they are feeling. What, if anything, came up for them in the video. You may want to state that you know that the video was powerful to give them an opening to discuss it.

2. If you are putting them in small groups, you can have them look at their pre-tests or the FAQ's and maybe discuss a couple of the myths that they think are most prevalent. Make sure you pull them back together as a large group to discuss what they found before concluding the activity.
3. If you are processing as a whole group, some possible questions are:
 - a. Was any of the information new or a surprise to you?
 - b. What did you learn from the video and information?
 - c. What resources are available if a friend discusses suicide?*
 - d. Can you tell by looking at someone if they are thinking about suicide?
 - e. What would you do if a friend discussed suicide?*
 - f. Review warning signs with the students (threats to take one's life; drawings or writings about death; dramatic changes in appearance, grades and/or activities; increased use of alcohol or drugs; change in eating or sleeping habits; giving away prized possessions)
 - g. Go over the FAQ's with the students

Things to Look out for:

- I. Possible reactions to the video/discussion:
 1. Laughter out of nervousness – this is a normal reaction for some and should not be looked upon or treated as deviant.
 2. Silence
 3. Crying
 4. Anger
- II. If a student is crying, angry or particularly quiet, engage them but do not push them to respond/participate in the activities. You may ask the student if s/he wants to see their counselor. If not, please let the counselor or Ivan know about that student's reaction.

Distribute Crisis Hotline cards to the students and make sure that they know the number is also on the back of their student ID's.

Closing Activity/Evaluation (on separate sheet)

** Stress to students that FRIENDS TELL as was highlighted in the video by both students and staff. Other resources at school are counselors, teachers, confidential boxes, coaches and any adult who they feel can support them. Outside of school, students can go to parents, clergy, coaches, adult relatives and any adult who they feel can support them. They can also access the Crisis Hotline.

Time-Out Self-Care: Affirmations for Self-Esteem

An affirmation is a positive statement you make about yourself or others. Affirmations can be important reminders of your own and another's value. An affirmation helps you refocus your attention away from your harsh internal critic toward your real abilities and strengths. An affirmation also reminds you that errors and mistakes are not the end of the world but a natural part of being human. They can coexist with self-esteem. You may repeat the following affirmations about control and esteem as often as you find helpful:

- I cannot control some things but I am not helpless.
- I cannot control other people but I am not helpless.
- I am not responsible for those things I cannot control.
- I accept those things in myself I cannot change.
- I can make positive choices for myself.
- My strengths and abilities deserve my appreciation.

Appreciate those abilities you have. If so, those are true strengths. Remind yourself of them often. Create your own affirmations by completing the following sentences:

I am not powerless, I can _____

I have the right to refuse _____

I am not helpless, I can _____

I deserve to _____

Frequently Asked Questions About Adolescent Suicide

Q How can I tell if someone is suicidal?

A There are indications that someone may be thinking of killing themselves. They might start giving away prized possessions, seem hopeless, talk of being unneeded or unliked/unloved by everyone, say things like “the world would be a better place if I wasn’t around,” talk about a plan for killing themselves, they may have marked changes in their personality, start/increase drug/alcohol use, or they may start taking unnecessary risks.

Q What do I say and do if I think someone is suicidal?

A Don’t be afraid to tell your friend you are concerned about them. Ask them if things are so bad that they are thinking of harming themselves. Be a good listener -- let them talk about their concerns without putting them down or making fun of the thoughts they share. Don’t challenge them (for example, by saying “Oh, you’d never do that!”). If you learn they are thinking of harming themselves, then don’t leave them alone. Get help from a teacher, school counselor, adult in the community or family, or call the crisis number on the back of your Reservoir ID card or in the materials we handed out today.

Q How many people our age commit suicide each year?

A Suicide is the third leading cause of death for students aged 15-24 and the sixth leading cause of death for youth aged 10-14. For people from the ages of 15 – 24, the number of deaths by suicide in the US each year is approximately 12 per 100,000 (doing the math, that’s about 1 in 10,000 people). The number is much smaller than you might think, but then very few people your age should be dying. And suicide, unlike certain diseases, is a preventable death. Of course, these data don’t address the number of suicide attempts, which has been estimated to be somewhere between 8 and 25 for every completed suicide.

Q If I’m concerned about a friend and ask them if they are thinking of killing themselves, couldn’t that put an idea in their head that could lead them to kill themselves?

A No. It is important to find out if a friend is in danger. Asking someone if they are thinking of suicide doesn’t make a person choose suicide as an option. It does give you the opportunity to get help.

Q Do I *really* have to tell an adult if I find out a friend is thinking of harming themselves? (Or if I am thinking of harming myself?)

A Yes! Friends will sometimes say “I won’t be your friend if you tell anyone this secret. But it is better to be left without a friend than to know you didn’t stop someone from killing themselves. One way you lose a friend for sure. It is often the case that friends later realize you did something to support them and that it turned out for the best.

Q Aren’t people who want to kill themselves crazy? I mean who would ever come up with an idea like that?

A No! Suicide can be associated with a mental illness, but just because someone has thought of suicide doesn’t mean they are “crazy.” Many people have had thoughts of harming themselves. They are faced with a problem and are trying to come up with different ways of handling it. Help them to realize that we all have bad days and, we know from our experiences, with help the pain can go away.

Answers/Explanations for Suicide Pre-Test Items

1. Suicides often happen without warning.
False Warning signs are often seen in people who are thinking about killing themselves. Suicidal individuals may engage in risky behaviors, show dramatic changes in mood and/or behavior, give away prized possessions, make comments about wishing they were dead, etc.
2. Drug or alcohol use is present in about half of all suicides.
True
3. Once someone is suicidal, they are suicidal
False With effective treatment, people can go on to lead happy, successful lives forever.
4. Asking someone if he/she has thought about killing themselves plants the idea in their heads.
False It is better to ask someone if they are considering suicide to find out if they are in danger of harming themselves.
5. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in young people.
True
6. Using data from 1998, more teenagers died from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, Influenza, and chronic lung disease *combined*.
True
7. When someone talks about killing themselves, a good friend will keep this information private.
False It is important to tell an adult so your friend can get the help he/she needs to save his/her life.
8. Suicide is only a problem for younger people.
False Suicide is a problem for all age groups. However, the elderly are the most likely group to die by suicide.
9. Based on information from 2001, guns were rarely used in suicides.
False In 2001, firearms were used in 54% of youth suicides
10. The best thing to “snap someone out” of considering suicide is to dare them to do it.
False Confronting someone who is suicidal in this way is dangerous. It is best to listen calmly to what the person is saying and respond in a way that shows you care about them and support them.

Suicide Prevention Advisory Pre-Test

Answer the following questions True (T) or False (F)

1. Suicides often happen without warning. T F
2. On the back of your Reservoir ID card, there
is a crisis phone number you can call
24 hours a day/7 days a week. T F
3. Once someone is suicidal, they are suicidal
forever. T F
4. Asking someone if he/she has thought about
killing themselves is likely to plant
the idea in their head. T F

5. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in
young people, ages 15-24. T F
6. Using data from 1998, more teenagers died T F
from suicide than from cancer, heart disease
AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia,
Influenza, and chronic lung disease
combined.
7. When someone talks about killing themselves, T F
a good friend will keep this information
private.
8. Suicide is only a problem for younger people. T F
9. Based on information from 2001, guns were T F
rarely used in suicides.
10. The best thing to “snap someone out” of
considering suicide is to dare them to do it. T F