



How to Talk About Suicide

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It's a common myth that people shouldn't talk about suicide, especially to someone who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts. It is normal to feel nervous or afraid of conversations about suicide, but that fear gets in the way of helping people who need support. Reaching out and talking to someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts will not cause them to act on their suicidal thoughts, but it may help them feel less alone.

The language we use when we talk about suicide matters. By using respectful language that does not blame people experiencing suicidal thoughts, we can help them feel less isolated and scared. Language that does not stigmatize or stereotype helps make it clear that people can and do get better. Here are some guidelines about how to talk about suicide:

Don't say: "Committed suicide"

The word "commit" implies a criminal act. Suicide is not a crime; it is a public health concern.

Do say: "Died by suicide" or "Lost their life to suicide"

Don't say: "Successful/unsuccessful suicide" or "completed/failed suicide"

This language implies that suicide is a positive achievement.

Do say: "Died by suicide," "survived a suicide attempt," or "fatal/non-fatal suicide attempt"

Don't say: "[Name] is suicidal"

Suicidal thoughts do not define a person. Using person-first language reduces stigma and makes it easier for people to talk about mental health.

Do say: "[Name] is experiencing suicidal thoughts" or "[Name] is thinking of suicide"

If you or someone you know are in crisis, please call 911, call/text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988, or text HOME to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.

Talk to someone who can help! To find a licensed psychologist near you, use PPA's Psychologist Locator at <https://www.papsy.org/locator>. For information on other mental health topics, go to <https://www.papsy.org>, then "Resources" and then "Public Resources". PPA offers these articles for informational purposes only; they are not a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.