

## **How to Talk About Suicide**

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It's a common myth that people **SHOULDN'T** talk about suicide, or shouldn't talk about it to a friend or loved one 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 language that takes the blame off of people experiencing suicidal thoughts, we can help people 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"

Using the word "commit" implies a criminal act or sin which may make a person feel more isolated and less likely to seek help. 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 (for example, saying "she has bipolar disorder" instead of "she is bipolar") reduces stigma and makes it easier for people to talk about mental health. Default to person-first language when talking about suicide.

**Do say:**

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

Click [here](#) for an article on suicide myths, facts, warning signs, and risk factors.

**If you or someone you know are in crisis, please call 911, or call/text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.**

If you feel you would benefit from talking with a professional and would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our [Psychologist Locator](#). You can also ask your health care professional or a trusted friend to recommend a psychologist or other mental health professional.