

Tips for Communicating about Suicide

Safe and effective suicide prevention messages...

- ✓ **Promote help-seeking** Identify the desired help-seeking behaviour such as calling a helpline, visiting a mental health professional, connecting with a support person or downloading a mental health app.
- ✓ **Address stigma** Use personal stories of resilience and recovery – examples of people who sought help and benefitted. Emphasize hope when talking about someone who experienced a suicidal crisis.
- ✓ **Raise awareness** Identify common **potential signs** of suicide thoughts (talking about wanting to die, mood changes, feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless), **risk factors** (mental illness, experiencing trauma or discrimination), and **protective factors** (connections to family and community support, a sense of belonging, coping skills).

Use the following tips when talking or writing about suicide:

Avoid...	Try...	Why?
using 'committed', 'completed' or 'successful' suicide.	using 'died by suicide', which describes the facts.	Simple, non-judging language helps reduce stigma around suicide.
suggesting suicide is inevitable, common, or that it can't be prevented.	emphasizing that suicide is preventable and help is available.	We can help prevent suicide by talking about it and encouraging help-seeking.
using words or images that reinforce stereotypes, myths or stigmas, such as once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal.	using images of support and hope, expressing that recovery is possible and promoting positive program or service stories.	People can have thoughts of suicide without wanting to die. Asking and talking about suicide can help someone who is struggling.
suggesting suicide is simple or making assumptions about someone's experience with suicide.	talking about suicide as complex and resulting from many individual, social and environmental factors.	Suicide is a unique experience for each person. We must seek to understand without making assumptions.

To learn more about suicide and access resources, helplines and training, visit www.ahs.ca/preventingsuicide.