



MESSAGING MATTERS

Tips for Safe and Effective Messaging on Suicide Prevention

1. PROVIDE A SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCE

- Always include a resource such as:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-8255
 - Crisis Text Line: TEXT “Home” to 741-741
- Describe the resources you are offering, and what to expect

2. EDUCATE THE AUDIENCE ABOUT WARNING SIGNS AND RISK FACTORS

- Include information about warning signs and life circumstances that can increase risk (risk factors)
- Visit www.suicideispreventable.org for a list of warning signs

3. AVOID DISCUSSING DETAILS ABOUT THE METHOD OF SUICIDE

- Avoid details that describe the suicide including weapon/method used, the specific location, and the location of the wound

4. EXPLAIN COMPLEXITY OF SUICIDE, AVOID OVERSIMPLIFYING

- Reference the complexity involved in suicide
- Avoid oversimplifying “causes” of suicide or pointing to one event as “the cause” of a suicide attempt or death
- Don’t speculate. It’s natural to want to answer the “why” involved in a suicide but rarely do we fully understand the reasons behind a suicide

5. FOCUS ON PREVENTION: AVOID SENSATIONAL LANGUAGE AND IMAGES

- Don’t use statistics that make suicide seem overly common
- Consider using positive statistics that highlight help-seeking such as number of calls to the local crisis line, or visits to a prevention focused website
- Use hopeful images that show people being supported, avoid images that show people suffering alone

6. HELPFUL RESOURCES

Know the Signs - for the public www.suicideispreventable.org

Reporting on Suicide - for the news media www.ReportingOnSuicide.org

Framework for Successful Messaging, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org

Each Mind Matters Resource Center- to find and download suicide prevention resources in multiple languages and formats www.EMMResourceCenter.org



suicideispreventable.org

Funded by counties through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63).

Adapted from County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency