Community Conversations: Support for Survivors of Suicide

STEPHANIE HEITKEMPER, MA MFT, LPC, RPT, FT
Special thanks to the Peter DeGeorge Family Foundation for supporting COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
The information contained herein is not therapeutic advice nor a substitute for therapy. It should not be used to diagnose or treat any mental health problem but is for information only and may not be applicable to you and your specific needs. The goal is to provide education about grief and general coping skills. If you are located within the United States and you need emergency assistance please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. The National Suicide Prevention Line is: 1-800-273-8255

If you are located within Colorado you may also call the Colorado Crisis Line at 844-493-TALK (8255).
“Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical, and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve.” – Earl Grollman
Who are you honoring or holding close to your heart tonight?

Text your vote to (712) 435-1406
Presentation Goals:

- Increase comfort around saying the word suicide, and explanation based on age
- Basic brain development, and what are impacts for stressors
- Identify & explore risk factors & protective factors
- Learn and use the acronym ALERT to support suicidal ideations
- Ways to navigate support and the changes that can occur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid</th>
<th>Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Committed Suicide&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Died by Suicide&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Ended his/her life&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;killed himself/herself&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Failed&quot; or &quot;Successful&quot; attempt</td>
<td>&quot;Suicide attempt&quot; or &quot;Death by suicide&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Check for your local areas specific telephone number

Check for your local Crisis Support Centers

Colorado Crisis Support:  
For Colorado Residents Only  
(That means you live in Colorado)!!!  
Phone: 1-844-493-8255  
Text: “TALK” 38255
Let’s Talk About the Brain:

Frontal lobe controls cognitive skills:
- Emotional expression
- Problem solving
- Memory
- Language
- Judgement
- Sexual behaviors

On average finishes developing approximately at age 25

Hidden Emotions

Where there is ANGER
There is always pain underneath

Eckhart Tolle

Crisis Text Line: “HELLO” 741741
Let’s Talk About the Brain:

Adolescent Brain: Frame work

Adult Brain: Is like a house with drywall.

National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273-8255
Crisis Text Line: “HELLO” 741741

(Steinberg, 2014)
What are you feeling?

- Worried
- Love
- Courage
- Sadness
- Pity
- Mad
- Nervousness
- Cheerful
- Lonely
- Alarmed
- Shocked
- Ornery
- Resistant
- Worthwhile
- Anxious
- Satisfied
- Tender
- Pleased
- Rebellious
- Impatient
- Cautious
- Hopeful
- Embarrassed
- Bored
- Overwhelmed
- Jealous
- Shy
- Confident
- Content
- Fear
- Anger
- Happiness
- Joy
- Scared
- Confusion
- Anticipation
- Trust
- Surprise
- Joy
- Disgust
- Shame
- Vulnerable
GRIEF + Fear = Flooding

National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273-8255   Crisis Text Line: “HELLO” 741741
Play is important:

- Self expression
- Access to the unconscious
- Direct teaching
- Indirect teaching

- Creative problem solving
- Resiliency
- Moral development
- Accelerated psychological development
- Self-regulation
- Self-esteem

- Catharsis
- Abreaction
- Positive emotions
- Counterconditioning fears
- Stress inoculation
- Stress management

- Therapeutic relationship
- Attachment
- Social competence
- Empathy

(Dr. Judi Parson, 2019)
How are you surviving?
School Support:

*It is important to find a program that fits the needs of your students, school, and community.*

- **More than Sad** - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
  - Designed for parents and teachers to support high school students
  - [Want to learn more? Want to get trained?](#)
- **Signs of Suicide** (SOS)- Designed for middle and high school students
- **Sources of Strength** Includes supporting elementary school students
- **Trevor Project** - supporting LGBTQ youth
  - Phone: 1-866-488-7386
  - [Trevor Chat](#) - Free confidential web chat
  - Trevor Text: Text “START” to 678-678
  - Trevor Space: Social networking for LGBTQ youth under 25
- **Active Minds**: Young adults
Digital Sandbox:

- What does your grief look like?
- What does grief support look like for you?
- What do you want others to know about your story?
- Can you create a “tray” about _____ emotion?
- What do you need from your guardian for your grief?
- What do you need from your community?
- What is the best part of Camp Erin or Camp Mariposa?
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you sad?
Risk Factors: Variables that are more common to those who die by suicide.

Protective Factors: Variables that protect individuals from dying by suicide.

Areas:
- Society
- Community
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Individual/ Personal

National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273–8255   Crisis Text Line: “HELLO” 741741
Non Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI)

Direct and intentional injury with no intent of suicide

Include but not limited too:
- Cutting
- Carving
- Abrasions
- Burning
- Hitting or punching self
- Erasing

Replacement Strategies:
- Call a friend or mentor
- Color a mandala
- Throw ice at a brick wall
- Exercise
- Follow a new recipe
- Call 1-800- DON'T CUT

(Bagwell, 2020)
Positive and Negative stressors can increase the NSSI

**Stressors:**
- Academic
- Personal
- Social
- Family
- Environmental

"Children learn more from what you are than what you teach."

W.E.B. DuBois

(Bagwell, 2020)
ALERT:

**A: ASK** about suicide inquiry

**L: Listen** for risk factors

**E: Engage** the protective factors

**R: Respond** with safety measures

**T: Tasks** stay connected

(Croswaite Brindle, 2018)
A: **ASK** about suicide inquiry

**Upfront questions/ Direct questions/ Honest questions:**

*Examples of Questions:*

- Have you been thinking about killing yourself?
- Have you been thinking about suicide?
- I have heard that others who have been feeling similar feelings to you, have considered suicide. Are you considering suicide?

**Frequency/ Duration:**

*Examples of Questions:*

- That sounds really tough. How often have you been feeling this way?
- How long do these feelings last?
- How do you control them? Can you control them?

(Croswaite Brindle, 2018) (Erbacher et al., 2015)
A: **ASK** about suicide inquiry

**Visualization/ Imagery:**

*Examples of Questions:*

- What would suicide look like for you?
- When you think about suicide, what do you see?

**Meaning:**

*Examples of Questions:*

- What would suicide mean for you?

(Croswaite Brindle, 2018) (Erbacher et al., 2015)
L: Listen for risk factors

Feelings of **Hopelessness**
**Anxiety** and **agitation**
Sleep changes
Reporting **no purpose** in life
Feelings of being **trapped**
Increase **alcohol and/or drug use**
**Withdrawal** from friends, family, and community
Rage, **uncontrolled anger**, expressions of wanting or seeking revenge
High **risk and/or reckless** behavior and activities
Dramatic **mood changes**
**Giving away** prized possessions
Sexual or Gender **minority status**

(Croswaite Brindle, 2018) (Erbacher et al., 2015)
**E: Engage the protective factors**

- **Easy access to effective, culturally competent care**
  - Support from medical and mental health care professionals

- **Coping, problem solving and conflict resolution skills**
  - Restricted access to highly lethal means of suicide (e.g., firearms)

- **Strong connections to family members**
  - Connectedness to safe schools

- **Academic, artistic, athletic achievements**

- **Nonviolent problem solving and conflict resolution**
  - Family acceptance for their sexual orientation and/or gender identity

- **A feeling of safety, support and connectivity at school through peer groups like Gay-Straight Alliances**
  - Positive connections with friends who share similar interests

- **Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide**
  - Positive role models and self esteem

(Croswaite Brindle, 2018) (Erbacher et al., 2015)
E: Engage the protective factors

YOU are stronger when you engage your resources:

- Mental Health
- Family Support
- Positive Friends
- Mentors
- Healthy Activities
- Generosity
- Spirituality
- Physical Health

How often do you need to review your list?

(Sources of Strength, 2021)
What resource do you need to engage in your life?
E: Engage the protective factors

Sources of strength can be adapted and explored for ALL ages:

- Notecard
- Journal
- Interactive word cloud
- Game
- Creative expression
  - Doodling
  - Mandala
  - Painting rocks
  - Nature walk

(Sources of Strength, 2021)
R: Respond with safety measures

7 steps total

Step 1: What are your warning signs? Triggers can include but are not limited to thoughts, images, thinking styles, moods, and or behaviors. When we recognize triggers, it makes using a plan to keep ourselves and thoughts safe. List your triggers below:


Step 2: Internal Coping Skills List. What are three things that you can do to take your mind off potential negative thoughts?


Step 3: External Coping Skills List. What are three places or people you can be with to take your mind off potential negative thoughts?


(Adapted from the Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center)

National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273-8255 Crisis Text Line: "HELLO" 741741
R: Respond with safety measures

7 steps total

(Adapted from the Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center)
What can help you? (Think: coping skills, resources, & activities)

Writing down material information is helpful. What do you need to write down? How can you share what is written down to help maintain your safety?

Support is critical- Who are 3 people that can support you?

As a parent/ facilitator/ educator/ therapist it is important to pause and reflect about the impact other’s ideations have on you:

• mentally
• physically
• emotionally
• spiritually

(Croswaite Brindle, 2018) (Erbacher et al., 2015)
Support

- Is it okay if support changes?
- What do you say to the kids?
- What do you need to feel supported?
- What you need may not match your partner or children.
What’s Your Role?

To speak up & ask **direct** questions!

◦ Inquire about mood swings you are seeing.
◦ Ask about a change in motivation.
◦ Explore an attitude change.
◦ Don’t ignore changes in maturity.

To **acknowledge your own feelings and compassion!**

When someone is engaging in an active plan:

◦ Stay calm!
◦ Remind them how brave they are that they shared their feelings!
◦ Reassure them you’re going to help them get help. You care, they matter!
◦ Ask for support in reducing immediate stressors.
◦ Ask for support in removing and or securing harmful and or lethal means.

National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273-8255    Crisis Text Line : “HELLO” 741741
What’s Your Role In an Immediate Crisis?

Crisis Behavior can include:

• Finding a suicide note
• A friend telling you they are hearing voices to kill themselves
• Feeling that if you leave a friend, they will kill themselves
• Finding out that your friend has made a non-lethal attempt to kill themselves

Immediately:

Call 9-1-1 or take them to the local emergency room
Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Remind them you are not going to leave them alone
Secure all harmful and or lethal means (knives, firearms etc.)
All it takes is **ONE** caring and compassionate person to take notice and start the conversation.

**CAN YOU CHALLENGE ONE FRIEND IN ALSO BECOMING ONE CARING & COMPASSIONATE PERSON TO START THE CONVERSATION?**

(AFSP, 2018)

National Suicide Prevention 1-800-273-8255  Crisis Text Line : “HELLO” 741741
when you stand and share your story in an empowering way, your story will heal you and your story will heal somebody else.

Iyanla Vanzant

Text your vote to (712) 435-1436

What is one positive word you're taking with you tonight?
The information contained herein is not therapeutic advice nor a substitute for therapy. It should not be used to diagnose or treat any mental health problem but is for information only and may not be applicable to you and your specific needs. The goal is to provide education about grief and general coping skills. If you are located within the United States and you need emergency assistance please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. The National Suicide Prevention Line is: 1-800-273-8255

If you are located within Colorado you may also call the Colorado Crisis Line at 844-493-TALK (8255).

Let’s Stay Connected: @Resilientminds
Special thanks to the Peter DeGeorge Family Foundation for supporting COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS.
Sources:


