



**TALK
SAVES
LIVES**

An Introduction to **Suicide Prevention** for VUMC



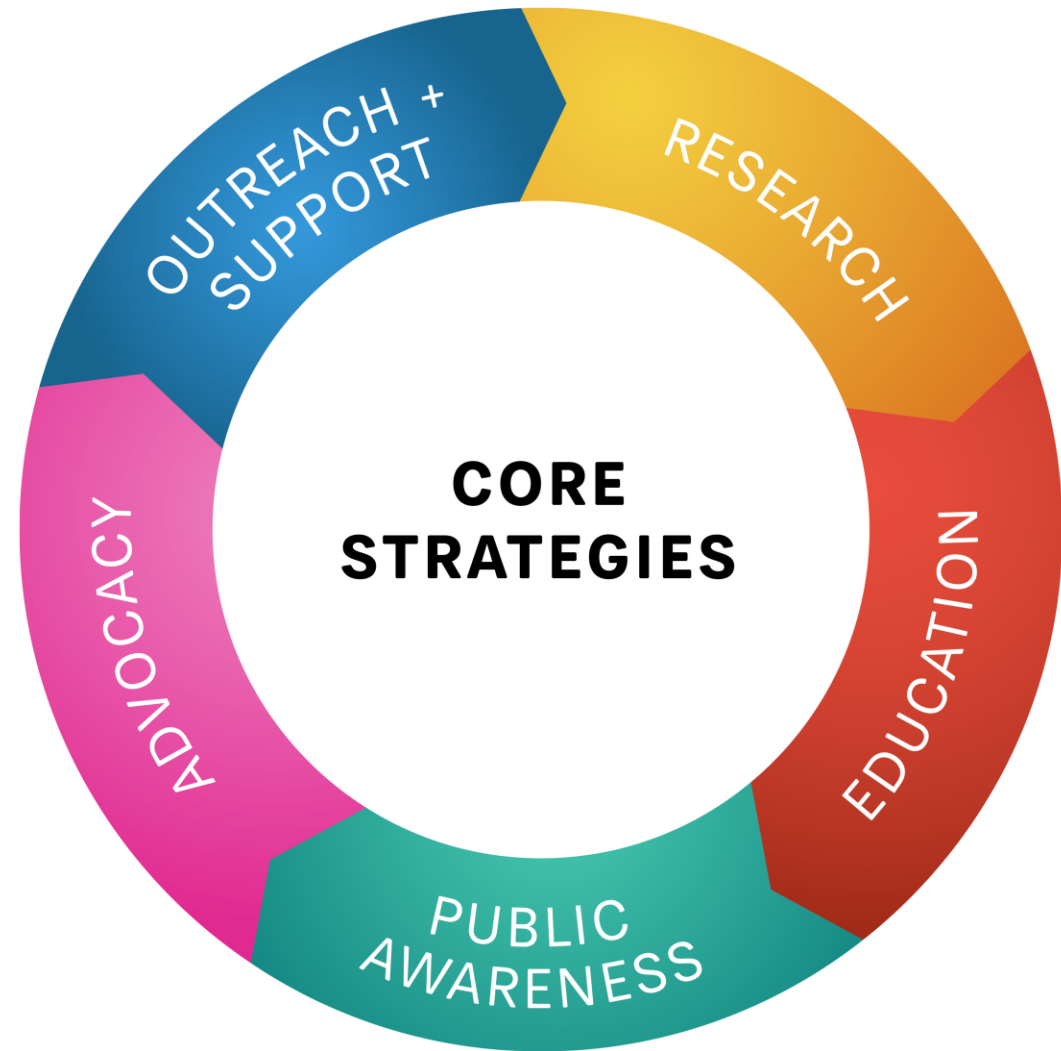
American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

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**AFSP's mission
is to save lives
and bring hope
to those affected
by suicide.**

For more, please see
afsp.org





Mental Health Matters

90%

of people who die by suicide most often have an underlying – and potentially treatable – mental health condition.

However, most people with mental health conditions do not engage in suicidal behavior or die by suicide.

Building a Culture that Addresses Suicide Prevention

- Universal education and health promotion
- Healthcare, schools, workplaces, etc.
- Changing social and cultural norms to decrease stigma and encourage help-seeking
- Prevention strategies for those who may be at increased risk
- Treatment and recovery
- Public policy





What You Will Learn

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Describe the impact of suicide
- Identify contributors to suicide and protective factors
- Understand how suicide may impact certain communities differently
- Describe how to recognize suicide warning signs
- Provide examples of how to start a conversation about suicide with someone you're concerned about
- List ways to seek and offer support and crisis resources for yourself or others

How We Talk Matters

Avoid saying:

Committed suicide • Failed or successful attempt

Say:

Died by suicide • Ended their life •
Suicide attempt • Death by suicide

Common Terms:

- Suicide loss survivor
- Survivor of suicide loss
- Suicide bereaved
- Bereaved by suicide
- Lived experience
- Suicide attempt survivor





Scope of the Problem

- Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Each year, millions of people think about suicide
- There are well over a million people in the U.S. each year who survive a suicide attempt
- Most people have been affected by suicide in some way

Differences in Suicide Rates

Suicide rates may differ based on a variety of factors, including age, gender, geography, ethnicity, race and occupation.

Males have 3.5 times higher rates of suicide than females



Middle and older adults have higher rates of suicide than younger people



Veterans have higher rates of suicide than non-veterans



Suicide rates are 3 times higher in homes where there is a firearm



Differences in Suicide Rates (continued)

While the rate of suicide has been increasing among youth, youth still have the lowest rates compared to other age groups



Although overall suicide rates are lower among people of color, rates among these groups are increasing faster



Suicide rates among Black and AAPI youth have been increasing, similar to other racial and ethnic groups of color



Indigenous youth and young adults die by suicide at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group



U.S. Suicide Rates are Highest Among These Industries and Occupations



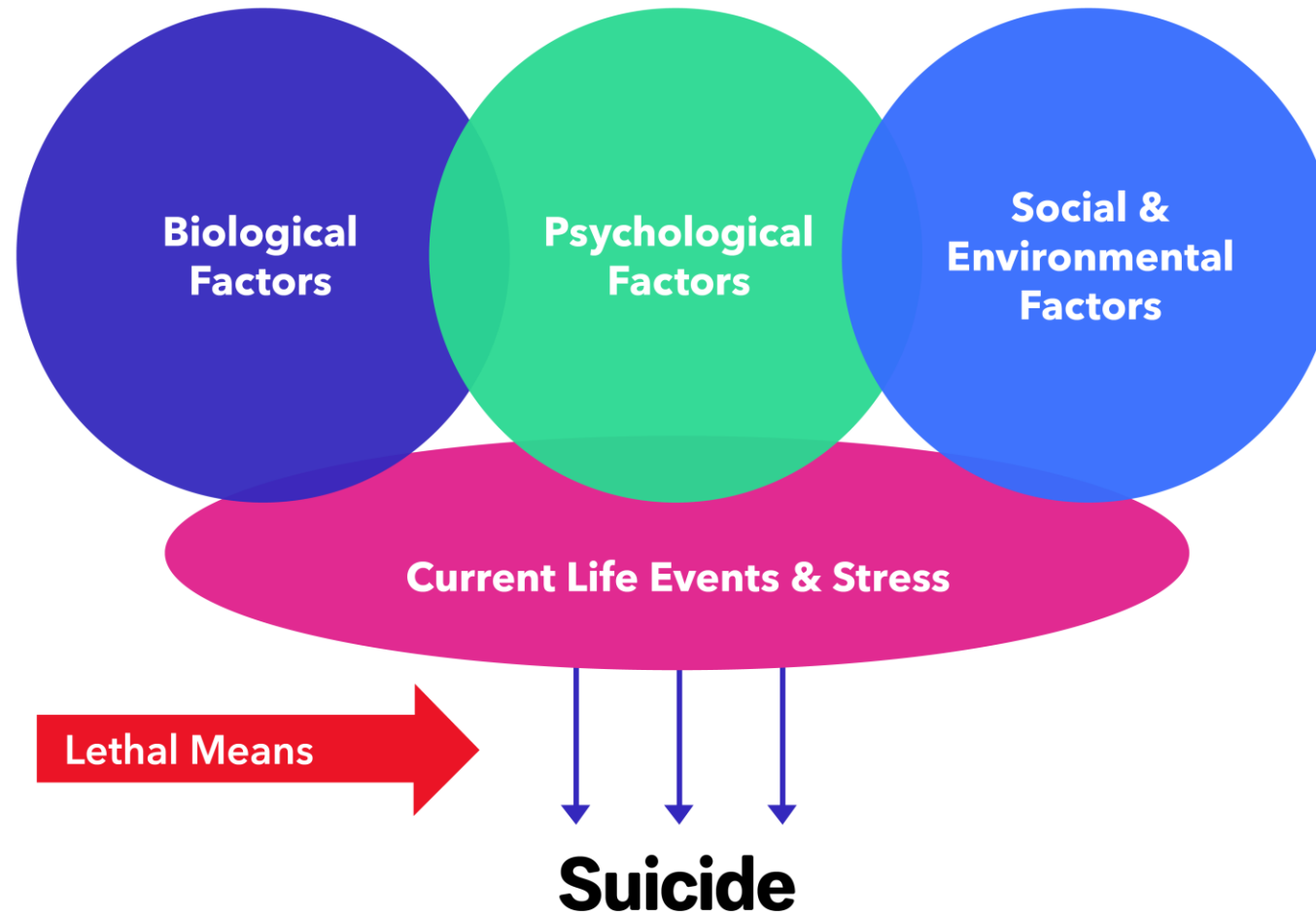
Industry Group

- Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
- Construction
- Other Services (such as automotive repair)
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting
- Transportation and Warehousing

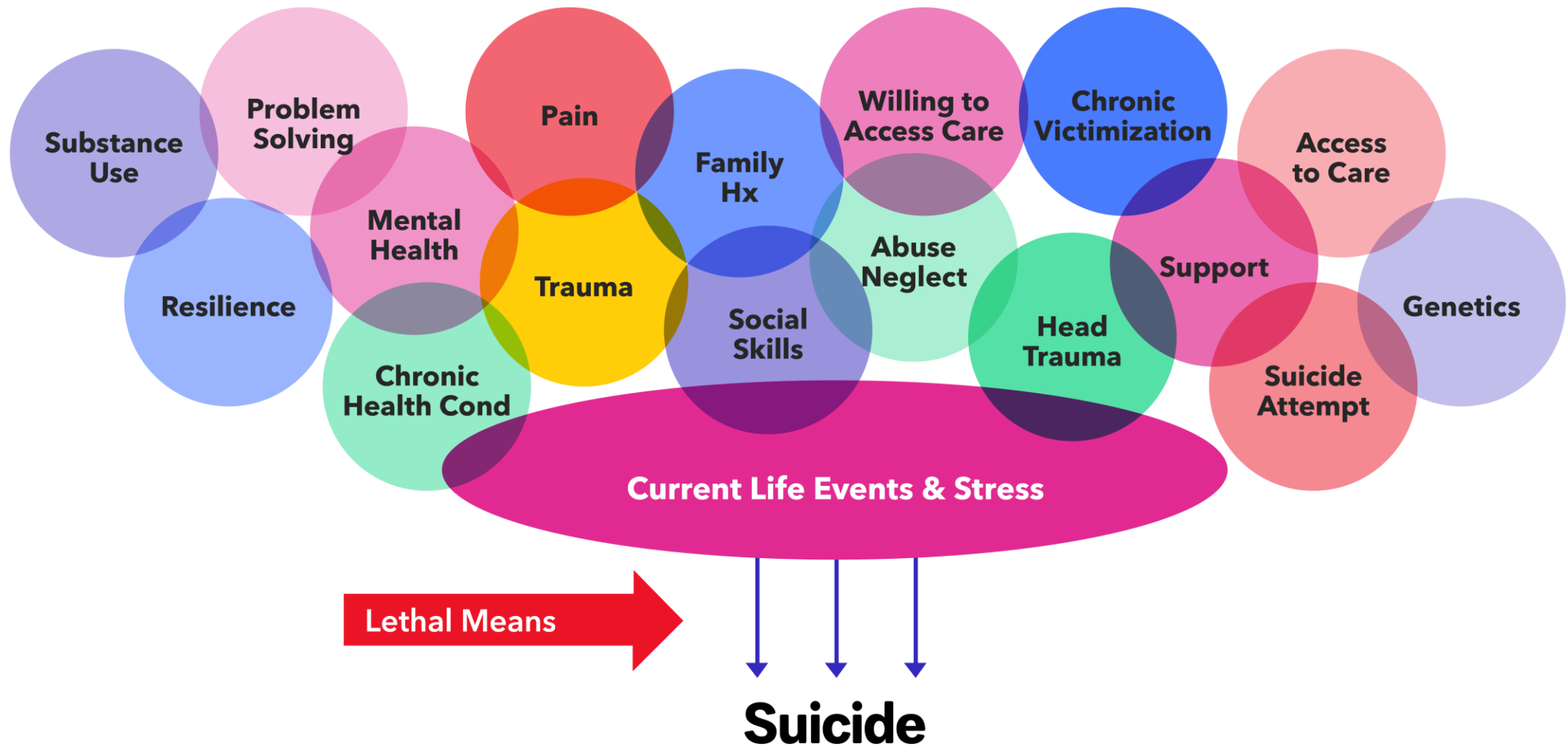
Occupational Group

- Construction and Extraction
- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media
- Transportation and Material Moving
- Protective Service
- Healthcare Support

Interacting Risk and Protective Factors



Interacting Risk & Protective Factors



Contributors to Suicidal Behavior

- Previous suicidal behavior
- Mental health conditions: depression, bipolar disorder, psychosis, personality disorders, eating disorders, substance use
- Physical health conditions, chronic pain
- Family history of mental illness or suicide loss
- Childhood trauma, abuse, neglect
- Traumatic brain injury
- Genetics
- Ongoing social factors: rejection, victimization, race or gender related discrimination, prejudice, systemic racism and historical trauma





Protective Factors

- Resilience
- Strong sense of personal identity including gender, race, and ethnicity
- Social and problem-solving skills
- Connection
- Social support
- Willingness to participate in mental health care
- Access to mental health care

**Certain groups and populations
experience suicide risk factors
and contributors differently**

Suicide in Older Adults

- Depression is often unidentified or untreated
- Chronic illness and pain
- When an older adult attempts to end their life, those attempts more often result in death
- More likely to experience loss compared to other groups





Suicide in LGBTQ+ Individuals

- LGBT individuals have more suicidal ideation and attempts than their heterosexual peers
- Social stigma, prejudice, and discrimination are associated with minoritized sexual orientation
- For LGBT youth, a common and powerful stressor is rejection by parents and other family members

Increasing acceptance and affirmation of LGBTQ+ identities and increasing access to LGBTQ+-affirming physical and mental health care can be protective factors.

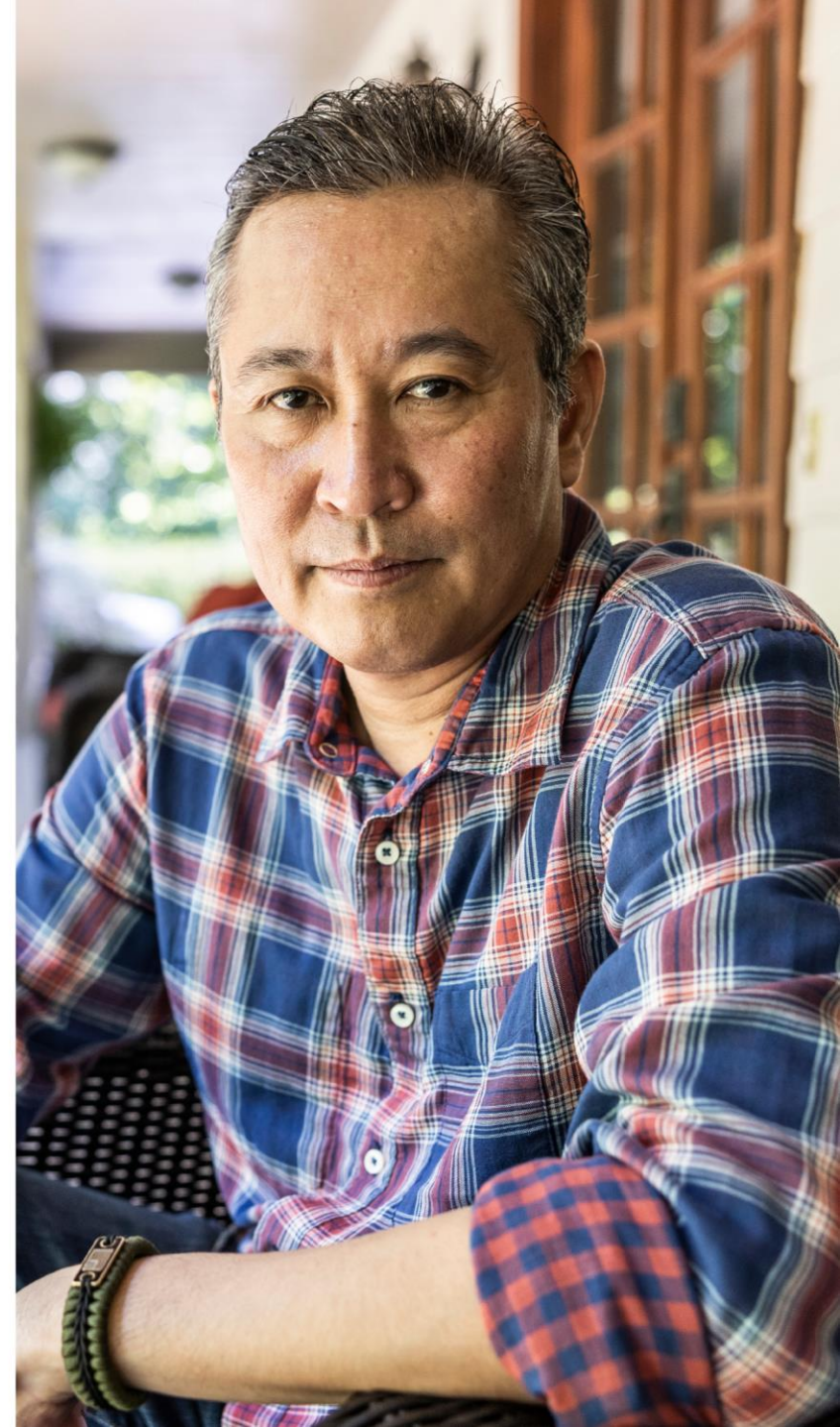
Suicide and Veterans

Suicide rates are higher among Veterans as compared to non-Veterans.

Contributors to suicide among veterans include:

- Readjustment to civilian life – especially the first 12 months following separation
- Exposure to traumatic events
- Homelessness
- Mental health conditions and substance use disorders
- Firearm ownership
 - Firearm ownership is over twice as prevalent among Veterans than for non-Veterans, and are involved in over 70% of Veteran suicides

Strategies to prevent Veteran suicide include safe storage of firearms, increased access and use of mental health services, and support for service members transitioning back to civilian life.





Thoughts of Suicide are Complex

- Part of them wants to live, part of them wants their pain to end
- They may think that if they weren't around, it would be better for their family and friends
- They may feel like a burden
- They may feel overwhelmed with hopelessness

Perspective of a Person in Crisis

- Experience a crisis point
- Unbearable physical or emotional pain that feels unescapable
- Their brain is operating differently; thinking lacks flexibility
- They can't access coping skills
- It's not a choice to feel this way



Thoughts of suicide are often temporary. Keeping people safe and helping them feel supported can get them through those critical moments.

A woman with short, curly dark hair and black-rimmed glasses is looking towards a man whose back is to the camera. She is wearing a light grey t-shirt and has her hands slightly raised as if in conversation. The man is wearing a white t-shirt. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

Steps You Can Take

- 1 Watch for warning signs
- 2 Reach out and have a conversation
- 3 Keep the environment safe
- 4 Connect to help and resources

1

Watch for Warning Signs

Suicide Warning Signs

Talk

- Ending their lives
- Having no reason to live
- Feeling hopeless
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

Behavior

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Issues with sleep
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Looking for a way to kill themselves
- Giving away possessions
- Missed work or declining work or school performance

Mood

- Depression
- Apathy
- Rage
- Irritability
- Impulsivity
- Humiliation
- Anxiety
- Sudden, unexplained happiness

2

Have a Conversation

Have a Conversation

- Trust your instinct
- Assume you're the only one who is going to reach out
- Be okay with the awkwardness



2

Have a Conversation

Reminders Before You Reach Out

- Avoid minimizing their feelings
- Avoid debating them that life is worth living
- Avoid offering advice on how to “fix” it

Remember, your role is to listen and help them connect to resources



I care about you, and I've noticed you haven't been yourself lately. You seem more [frustrated] than you've been in a while, and I'm wondering how you're doing.

You are an important [colleague and friend] to me. You don't seem like yourself. I wonder if what's happening [at work] these days is stressing you out. Is everything okay?

I have missed seeing you [at the gym] lately. With everything that's going on [in your family,] I wonder if you're feeling [overwhelmed].

2

Have a Conversation

Listen with Empathy

- Ask open-ended questions and listen to their response
- Show empathy and support with your words and body language
- Listen for warning signs

How has that made you feel? I hear you and I'm here for you.

That sounds really hard. I'm sorry you're hurting so much.

Are you having a hard time dealing with that? I care about you and want you to be safe.

I see that. I want to help you find the help you need.

2

Have a Conversation

Ask Directly About Suicide

Research shows that asking about suicide does not put the thought in someone's head. Instead, it can bring relief and can be lifesaving.



You can start with:

Sometimes when people feel like you do, they think of ending their life, are you having those thoughts?

It is important to ask the question directly:

Are you thinking of ending your life?

Are you thinking about suicide?

2

Have a Conversation

If they're not thinking about suicide, continue to listen and provide support

I'm sorry you're hurting so much.

I care about you and want you to get through this rough time.

Are you getting help from a professional? I want to help you find the help you need.

2

Have a Conversation

If they are thinking about suicide, find out more

Although a lot of feelings may come up if someone tells you they are thinking about suicide, it is helpful to learn more so you know how best to support them.

Do you have (method)?
Do you have that available?

Do you have a plan to end your life?

Can you give that to me
or someone until you get
through this difficult time?

I want you to
be here and
will help you.

2

Have a Conversation

Next Steps in the Conversation

- Thank them for sharing with you
- Remind them you are here for them
- Connect them with resources
- Stay in touch

Thank you for sharing with me. Do you want me to help you call your therapist tomorrow before we play basketball?

You know, you've been on my mind since we had that conversation the other day. How are you doing today?

I've really been thinking about what we talked about, and I want to circle back. How are you feeling since we spoke?

Example Conversation: Talk Away the Dark



3

Keep the Environment Safe

The most important thing you can put between a person thinking about suicide and their way of ending their life is time.

Time allows the crisis to de-escalate and the opportunity for help.

3

Keep the Environment Safe

Help them limit access to lethal means

Examples of how you might restrict lethal means:

- Remove or secure firearms, including decorative firearms (unloaded, locked, and disassembled)
- Store ammunition separately
- Secure medications including over the counter medications
- Secure toxic substances

Additionally, you can:

- Ask what they might need to feel safer
- Encourage them to refrain from substance use
- Encourage them to discuss keeping the environment safe with a mental health professional

“Lethal means” refers to a method that can be fatal if one uses it to attempt suicide.

3

Keep the Environment Safe

Suicide and Firearms

- Nearly half of all U.S. households have at least one firearm
- In the U.S., around half of all suicides involve firearms
- In some states, firearms are used in as many as 70% of suicides
- Most firearm deaths are suicides in the U.S.
- If someone is at risk for suicide, having a gun in the house can be fatal

4

Connect to Resources

Crisis Resources

If someone has a suicide plan or is in a crisis and not safe, take immediate action.



988

Dial 988; Press 1 for veterans, 2 for Spanish, 3 for LGBTQ

Text 988 (English & Spanish)

988lifeline.org

Crisis Text Line

Text TALK to 741741 for English

Text AYUDA to 741741 for Spanish

crisistextline.org

Emergency Department

Help the person get to emergency services

Trevor Project – LGBTQ Youth

1-866-488-7386

Text START to 678-678

thetrevorproject.org

Trans Lifeline

1-877-565-8860

translifeline.org

4

Connect to Resources

Call 911 for medical emergencies—such as an attempt in progress.



4

Connect to Resources

Connect to Professional Care

- Visit a mental health or medical provider who can help:
 - [Findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)
 - Mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help
 - incusivetherapists.com
- Get an evaluation
- Discuss treatment options and interventions, such as safety planning, if applicable
- Continue treatment, follow up regularly
- Practice self-care and connect with loved ones and your community

We recognize there are many barriers to receiving mental health care, including a shortage of mental health professionals



4

Connect to Resources

Postvention is Prevention: Resources

Providing support for loss survivors is important and is another way to prevent suicide. Resources include:

AFSP resources and programs available to help you heal

[Afsp.org/loss](https://afsp.org/loss) and [Afsp.org/get-help](https://afsp.org/get-help)

The Dougy Center, The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

[Dougy.org](https://dougy.org)

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (military or veteran)

[TAPS.org/suicide](https://taps.org/suicide)

Alliance of Hope for Suicide Survivors

[Allianceofhope.org](https://allianceofhope.org)

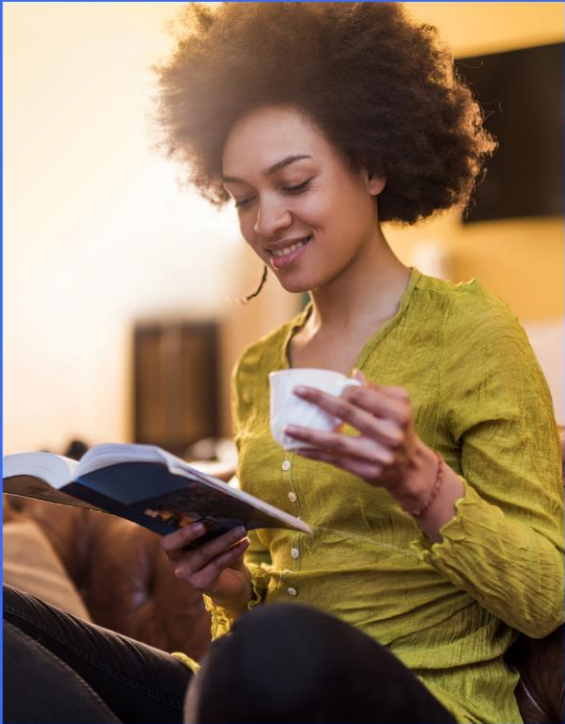
American Association of Suicidology

suicidology.org/resources/suicide-loss-survivors



Prioritize Self-Care

Mind



Body



Soul



Surroundings



Summary: Lessons from Suicide Research



Together, we can create a culture that prioritizes mental health and suicide prevention.





Why is my Feedback Important?

- Your opinion and experiences are critical
- With your voice, we can better improve our programs
- Your feedback will help us know: Is the program working? What needs to be changed?
- Your feedback is confidential and will not be linked to you

Help us measure our impact by completing the post survey.

Visit afsp.org/TSLfeedback



Other Ways to Take Action to Prevent Suicide with Us

- Join your local Chapter
- Become an advocate
- Attend a training to become a volunteer presenter
- Walk in your community
- Partner to bring prevention to your community
- Sponsor an event
- Give a gift
- Engage with our social media accounts

Learn more at afsp.org/Tennessee





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To learn more visit afsp.org/TalkSavesLives



AFSP Tennessee Chapter

Follow us @afsptn

Visit afsp.org/Tennessee



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