

# Break the Stigma

## Bring Suicide Out of the Dark

Suicide is a major problem in the United States. Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death for all ages in the United States (CDC 2019). Thousands of people take their own life for a variety of reasons. Usually a person with suicidal feelings has experienced deep emotional



**Mental health is just as important as physical health.**

trauma or intense situations. This could range from an abusive relationship to a serious illness or injury. Suicide doesn't always make sense to someone on the outside. Many people who are considering suicide feel as if it's their only option.

## Promote Mental Health

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Just like you brush your teeth everyday, taking time to reflect on your feelings is crucial for a healthy mindset. Mental health looks different for everyone and everyone needs an outlet to decompress after a long day.

Mental health has long been overlooked in American society. The concept of looking perfectly fine on the outside, while suppressing your feelings can make it harder to live your daily life. More and more, people have started to normalize taking mental health days. We live in a work-centered society, so taking a break doesn't always feel accepted. Promoting good mental health habits is the first step in lowering suicide rates. By taking the time we need to promote a healthy way of living, people will learn how to better deal with their emotions in uncertain situations.

**Suppressing feelings can make it harder to live daily life.**



## Join the Conversation

Suicide is not frequently talked about within our society due to the stigma surrounding mental health. Fear and unawareness contribute to the lack of discussion. People often feel as though they don't know enough, so it's better to say nothing. This is why we, as a society, need to promote mental health education.

Don't be afraid to talk about your personal struggles and conflicts. Everyone goes through hard times — from sharing these experiences, we can create deeper connections.

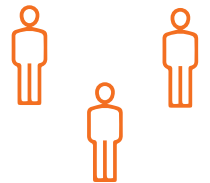


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## All Ages are at Risk

Suicide affects everyone, everywhere. Suicidal tendencies can appear in any age, gender, or race. That's why it is so important for everyone to join the conversation. By familiarizing yourself with the symptoms, you could save the life of a friend, loved one, or community member.

**Now, more than ever, we must be vigilant for symptoms of mental illnesses in the people around us.**



## Life After Covid-19

As we look forward to our "new normal" after Covid-19, we will need to handle the lasting effects of the global pandemic on our mental health. It will take time to regain social skills and readjust from uncertainty and loneliness. The end of the pandemic may leave even more people at risk for developing mental illnesses, like depression. Now, more than ever, we must be vigilant for symptoms of mental illnesses in the people around us.



**Suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10 - 34 in the U.S.**

Suicide was the **4th** leading cause of death for ages 35 - 44 in 2019.

source: cdc.gov

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

afsp.org

U.S. Crisis Text Line

text HELLO to 741741

## Recognizing Suicidal Behavior



Sadness



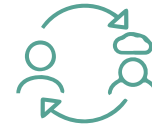
Insomnia



Hopelessness



Withdrawal



Mood Swings



Changes in Eating



Drug Use



Rage



Self-loathing



Feeling Trapped



Despair



Thoughts of Death

Suicide can be hard to predict. A person who is developing suicidal thinking could have a variety of symptoms, or just one. In addition to the above, those struggling could also be dealing with feelings of guilt, pain, or being a burden; making a plan or preparations; struggling with self-harm or trauma; seeking revenge; taking risks; changing their appearance; talking about suicide or saying goodbye.

Educating yourself is a great first step in suicide prevention. If someone you know is exhibiting any of the above symptoms, reach out and help them get the support they need. You should reach out about their mental health even if you are unsure. If untreated, mental illnesses can leave people at higher risk to develop suicidal thinking. However having a mental illnesses does not mean a person will develop suicidal thinking.

## The Importance of Language

Remember that even if a person is struggling with their mental health, they are still a person. Always use phrases that emphasize that they are a person before describing their mental illness. For example, you would say “This person is struggling with suicidal thoughts” rather than “They are a suicidal person.” The way we phrase our words can significantly impact their reception.

## Supporting Those Left Behind

People who are affected by a suicide often experience feelings of grief and guilt. It can be hard to keep your mind from circling down the rabbit hole of “What if I did this differently?” and “Would they still be here if I did this?”

The intense feelings following a loved one’s passing can be really hard on one’s mental health. No matter how someone is grieving, it is important to let them know that you are there for them.

## Special Resources for Grieving

Grieving looks different for everybody and is extremely taxing on our physical and mental states. People take different amounts of time to process a death, have different ways to cope with their feelings, and act differently when presented with a passing of a loved one.

Healthy grieving is not about getting over a death. It is about being present with your emotions and learning to live with them. Bereavement counseling, grief hotlines, and other resources are available if you or someone you know is having trouble grieving a loved one.



There was one death by suicide in the U.S. every 11 minutes in 2019.

**47,511** Americans died by suicide in 2019.

sources: afsp.org and cdc.gov

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## Call 911 for Emergencies

Assess the situation and severity of their suicidal feelings. In an emergency situation, call 911 and explain the situation. Stay with the person, remove all sharp and dangerous objects within the environment, and follow 911's instructions.



If the person is not in immediate danger, find a way to express your concerns. Preparation is key to make a meaningful interaction.

## The Right Way to Ask the Right Questions

### 1. Explain the symptoms you have noticed

Write down the behaviors that have caused you to have this discussion. By being specific, it can help progress the conversation. It can also make it easier for the person who is struggling to recognize the symptoms.



### 2. Be direct

To have a serious conversation, it needs to be planned and thoughtful. This means do not casually bring it up as your friend is leaving. Rather, sit down and discuss your concerns in a controlled environment.



### 3. Frame your questions

Start this conversation by framing your questions to be answered with a yes or no, but not in a way that assumes an answer of no. For example, saying "Are you experiencing suicidal thoughts?" is a much more effective question than "You aren't thinking about killing yourself, right?" This helps to directly identify where the person needs help.



### 4. Validate

Many people struggle with mental health, so tell them that they are not alone. Listen to their feelings without judgment. However, do not promise secrecy, no matter the situation. Suicide can never be repaired, but friendship can. Stay with them until they have the resources that they need to be safe from harm.



### 5. Share resources

There are many available resources for people who are struggling with mental health on the local, state, and national levels. Take the first step and find resources that can help with their struggles. An internet search of your city and state followed by "suicide resources" will give you local hotlines and resources that are close to home.



**There is one suicide for every estimated 25 suicide attempts.**

There were more than twice as many suicides (47,173) as there were homicides (19,510) in 2018.

sources: [save.org](http://save.org) and [nimh.nih.gov](http://nimh.nih.gov)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

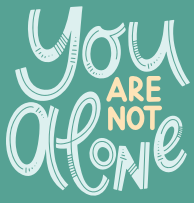
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# Help for Grieving

## Help for the Grieving Process

Brianna Abbott is a counselor at Worthington Kilbourne High School and has been a Bereavement Counselor for over ten years. Her passion in life is to make a difference by helping others. Her job as a Bereavement (grief) Counselor is to help normalize grieving and reframe how people perceive deaths. Grief doesn't have a timeline, so she says she tries to help people "not get over their feelings, but live with them."

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Brianna's goal wasn't always to be a school counselor. She knew that she wanted to "help people when they're struggling in order to get them to a better place." She started her career at Lifeline Ohio, an organ donor organization, as the Community Education Coordinator. Here, she worked with support groups for transplant patients and families who lost loved ones waiting for a transplant. From this experience, she realized that she wanted to work with children and became a counselor for Worthington Schools. She later expanded her role to also be the district's crisis coordinator. She provides insight from her extensive background in grief counseling to prepare Worthington Schools for crises.

Brianna says mental health to her means "having the strength to feel your feelings and being present with them." It takes a lot of courage to be able to choose how you respond to any situation. By being in control of your emotions, you can do anything you set your mind to. She says "mental

**mental health means "having the strength to feel your feelings and being present with them"**

health isn't as obvious, but it is as significant as a physical injury." The biggest misconception about counseling is that seeking out someone for help is a sign of weakness. Brianna describes how courageous and strong people are when they reach out for help. Our society has such a stigma around talking about mental health, so it takes a lot for people to ask for help when they need it.

The hardest part of grief is acknowledging your honest emotions. Brianna speaks about how people struggle to feel their honest emotions because they don't want to impede on their love for them. Part of her job as an Bereavement Counselor is to help people realize that having anger, sadness, or even frustration at a passed loved one does not take away from the love that you have for them. Society has made people feel like they can't express their feelings in order to be "strong" for those around you, but sometimes taking off that mask is exactly what you need to do.

**"mental health isn't as obvious, but it is as significant as a physical injury."**

## Covid-19 Is Changing Our Support System

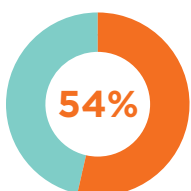
Brianna says Covid-19 has severely impacted her profession. The coronavirus has impacted every aspect of life from grieving to supporting one another. Many people feel helpless because so many things are out of

**having anger at a passed loved one does not take away from the love that you have for them**

their control. People feel guilty for not being there for loved ones, like they didn't do enough. Saying goodbye has always been hard, but with the lack of connection and physical support, many people are struggling.

Brianna says "the reality with every death is an element of fear that the loved one will be forgotten, and that the life they lived won't be for anything."

Society has forced many unrealistic perceptions of grieving upon us, and we need to realize that grieving is different for everyone. It takes time and energy to live with your feelings. Many people are concerned that they will say the wrong things, so they say nothing. Brianna urges everyone to reach out and be there for one another. While we might not be able to provide physical support, we can still support one another by picking up a phone, writing an email, sending flowers — anything that shows your loved ones that you care.



**54% of Americans were affected by suicide in 2019.**

Thoughts and attempts among high school students are higher than adults in general.

sources: afsp.org and cdc.gov

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