



# 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](http://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](http://www.suicideispreventable.org)

Reporting on Suicide - for the news media [www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](http://www.ReportingOnSuicide.org)

Framework for Successful Messaging, National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention  
[www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org](http://www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org)

Each Mind Matters Resource Center- to find and download suicide prevention resources in multiple languages and formats [www.EMMResourceCenter.org](http://www.EMMResourceCenter.org)



[suicideispreventable.org](http://suicideispreventable.org)

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

Adapted from County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency