

Changing the Narrative on Suicide

Author: Lisa Bershok, MSW, LICSW, Suicide Prevention Program Manager, CentraCare

Learn the Signs of Suicide

Every day in Minnesota, individuals experience stress, emotional pain and sometimes thoughts of suicide. It is important to learn how to recognize and respond to suicide by knowing the warning signs of suicide. These warning signs may be displayed through direct conversation, text message or social media. By recognizing the signs, knowing how to start the conversation, and where to turn for help, you have the power to make a difference.

Have a Conversation

Talking about suicide in an open and caring manner can help those who are thinking about suicide to connect with help and support. Find ways to engage the person with your concern and talk directly about suicide. For tips on how to start the conversation, words to use, and how to respond to the person, please explore Know How to Help on the “Take 5 to Save Lives” website. By letting the person know they are not alone, that you are there for them, can provide hope. Your willingness to listen and help can save a life.

Connect with Support

Be willing to help the person connect with support. Call, text or chat the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at any time. You can connect the person with local mental health services. If you are not sure where to start, contact your primary care provider for an appointment and help in locating resources in your community. However, if the person is exhibiting emergency warning signs, don't leave them alone and call 911 or help get the person to a local emergency department for further evaluation.

It's important to know that if you are concerned for someone in your life, but are not sure what to do, you can always call, text or chat the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for help in deciding what the next steps should be. The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones.

Recognize the Impact

Recognize and honor the impact suicide has on suicide attempt survivors and suicide loss survivors. Often, we do not know what to say to someone who has lost a loved one to suicide, or after someone is recovering from a suicide attempt. If you care about a suicide loss survivor or a suicide attempt survivor, find resources online to help guide the support you can provide them. If you are a suicide loss survivor or a suicide attempt survivor, these resources can help support you on your healing journey.

If you are struggling with your emotional or mental health or having thoughts of suicide, you are not alone. You have a suicide prevention community that is here for you. If you don't feel you can talk to a family member, friend or mental health professional about how you are feeling, please call, text or chat the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You are not alone. Support is available.

Raise Awareness

Spread the word on social media, within your community, your workplace, your family and your friends. You can share the “Take 5 to Save Lives” Campaign on social media by visiting their website. Start a conversation about suicide with the people you care about. This will help them identify you as a safe person to talk to, if they ever feel like they are having an emotional crisis or thoughts of suicide. There are apps online that can help people manage stress and provide help with coping with life stressors. Talk about ways to practice self-care. Avoid using stigmatizing language around mental health and suicide. The more we create open, direct conversations about suicide in our families, workplaces, schools and communities, the more opportunities we have to connect people to support before a suicide attempt.

If you are interested in learning more about suicide prevention or want additional resources, CentraCare's Suicide Prevention Program can provide training for your work, school or community group. Please contact Lisa Bershok at 320-251-2700, ext. 23793, or Summer Coleman at 320-251-2700, ext. 72343, or visit centracare.com.