

Talking about suicide safely



Helpful ways to talk about suicide as a social issue

You may want to talk about the social impact of suicide to help people understand why meaningful conversations, strong relationships, and a sense of belonging can protect the people we know and love.

To help you talk about this sensitive issue constructively, there are a few simple rules to follow:

- We don't talk about method and location of suicide because we don't want to promote ways for people to hurt themselves.
- We never sensationalise the issue or focus on suicide deaths of famous people with the view to promoting our cause.
- We never use stigmatising language when discussing suicide.
- We like to provide options for seeking help, and positively promote the role of health professionals and other services in supporting people struggling with life. It's helpful to include contact information for national crisis services and local services wherever possible.
- We're also very conscious that suicide and the loss of loved ones is a pain that many people carry with them every day. We're sensitive to the feelings of bereaved people and those with lived experience.

As well as following these rules, we're also careful about the language we use. Use the table below to understand what language is best when talking about suicide with others or as part of an R U OK? event or communication.

Issue	Unhelpful language	Helpful language
Language that presents suicide as a desirable outcome	'successful suicide', 'unsuccessful suicide'	'took their own life', 'ended their own life'
Phrases that associate suicide with crime or sin (because this has an impact) on the bereaved and those who have attempted suicide)	'commit suicide', 'committed suicide'	'died by suicide', 'took their own life'
Language that glamorises a suicide attempt	'failed suicide', 'suicide bid'	'made an attempt on his life', 'suicide attempt', 'non-fatal attempt'
Phrases that sensationalise suicide	'suicide epidemic'	'Higher rates', 'increasing rates', 'concerning rates'
Gratuitous use of the term 'suicide' out of context	'suicide mission', 'political suicide'	Refrain from using the word 'suicide' out of context