



Talking About & Dealing with Suicide Tip Sheet

Brina Tiemeyer, LMSW, CAADC, CCS-DP | Wedgwood Director of Clinical Services

In one way or another, suicide impacts everyone. There is about 1 death every 11 minutes from suicide in the U.S. (Michigan is about average for the U.S.)¹

**For imminent safety issues always
contact 911 and the Crisis Line 988.**

FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO HAVE LOST SOMEONE TO SUICIDE:

- Do not place blame - it is not your fault.
- Accept your Emotions - Expect to have to manage traumatic grief and ambiguous loss.
 - Avoid searching for details or reasons.
 - Grief will be a process, expect setbacks, acknowledge uncertainty, and be present for the long-haul.
 - Do not worry about what you "should" feel or do
- Talk to a professional - Get help and support from a psychologist or other mental health professional whom will aide you in finding helpful and healthy coping tools
- Draw on existing support systems - Reach out to others affected and check in on them as well.
- Join a community – support groups can help process emotions alongside others who have experienced similar feelings

FOR TALKING WITH AND SUPPORTING KIDS WHO HAVE LOST SOMEONE TO SUICIDE:

- Manage your own feelings first.
- Be honest (using age-appropriate language).
 - Consider developmental level, circumstances, and level of ability for you as the adult to manage your own feelings.
- Validate feelings.
- Avoid rumors.
- Tailor support to child's needs.
- Help them extend their own support (i.e. ask who they can talk to at school and how that person could support them).
- Handle school announcements with care (avoid PA).
- Identify students who need more support.
- Prevent imitation and minimize positive attention.
 - Avoid statements regarding the person being no longer troubled, statements that potentially glorify or romanticize their actions
- Generally mindful about how your words can impact others.
- Choose words carefully and focus on the positive aspects of the person's life.
 - It is appropriate to use "Suicide". "suicidal thoughts or ideation". "completed suicide". "attempted suicide", "ended their own life or took their own life.", "died by suicide" and similar terms.
 - Avoid terms that are incorrect, imply accomplishment, or are subjective (i.e. "committed suicide" is a legal term and the act or attempt has changed from a criminal to a civil issue. Another example of wording to avoid: "Successful attempt"
- Keep communication open.

www.wedgwood.org/counseling | 616.942.7294

For imminent safety issues always contact 911 and the Crisis Line 988.