

Suicide Prevention: Creating Hope Through Language

Why? Research shows:


- The words we choose matter.....Language is powerful!
- Talking about suicide can help protect someone
- Non stigmatising, compassionate language is important


Alongside the language, remember:


- Don't avoid conversations through worry you'll say the wrong thing
- Show you are listening
- Find a quiet place without disturbances
- Try not to cut the conversation short It's ok to slip up from time to time
- You can find out more information at suicidepreventionwestyorkshire.co.uk


 **SAY: Died by suicide, lost their life to suicide, took their own life.**

 **AVOID: Commit/committed suicide.**


 The word 'commit' could imply suicide is a sin or crime.


 **SAY: Died by suicide, fatal suicide attempt.**

 **AVOID: Successful or completed suicide.**


 It can frame a very tragic outcome as an achievement or something positive.


 **SAY: Suicide attempt, survived a suicide attempt.**

 **AVOID: Failed or unsuccessful suicide attempt.**


 Failed or unsuccessful can imply the opposite would be a positive outcome.


 **SAY: is thinking of suicide, is feeling suicidal, is experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings**


 **AVOID: ...is suicidal.**


 Helps to avoid defining someone by their experience with suicide.


 **AVOID: is feeling suicidal because of / took their own life because.**


 The reasons for someone thinking of or taking their own life are complex so it is important not to speculate.

 **AVOID: Cry for help.**

 Suicide attempts must be taken seriously. Describing an attempt as 'cry for help' dismisses the intense emotional distress someone is experiencing.

 **SAY: Are you having thoughts of suicide? / are you feeling suicidal? / have you been thinking about killing yourself?**

 **AVOID: You're not going to do anything silly are you? / Are you thinking of ending it all? / You're not going to top yourself are you?**

 This is to show that you are prepared to talk about suicidal thoughts and feelings and take it seriously. It's important to be direct. Using the word suicide shows people you are ok with them talking about it too and that you are there to listen.

Information has come from:

[Shining a light on suicide](#)

[Research Gate: Language Use and Suicide: An Online Cross-Sectional Survey](#)

[Research Gate: Suicide and Language: Why we shouldn't use the 'C' word](#)

[American Psychological Association](#)

[Samaritans: Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide](#)