

ATTACHMENT 4.24

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH SUICIDE-LOSS | SUICIDE / PERMITTED TO DISCLOSE

TALKING POINTS	WHAT YOU CAN SAY
<p><b>Give accurate information and use age-appropriate language about suicide.</b></p> <p>If the family of the deceased has permitted the school to disclose the cause of death, it is imperative that you do so. Saying the word “suicide” or the phrase “killed themselves” is essential.</p> <p>Avoid the following phrases as they are outdated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “committed suicide”</li> <li>• “successful suicide”</li> <li>• “completed suicide”</li> </ul> <p>Suicide is a complicated behavior. Help students understand the complexities.</p>	<p>“This person died by suicide.”</p> <p>“This person killed themselves.”</p> <p>“Suicide is not caused by a single event such as fighting with parents, getting a bad grade, or experiencing a breakup.”</p> <p>“In most cases, suicide is caused by mental health struggles like depression or substance misuse. Mental health problems affect the way people feel and can prevent them from thinking clearly or rationally. Struggling with your mental health is nothing to be ashamed of.”</p> <p>“There are effective treatments to help people who struggle with their mental health. Suicide is preventable.”</p>
<p><b>Address blaming and scapegoating.</b></p> <p>It is common to try to answer the question “why” by blaming others for the suicide.</p>	<p>“Blaming others for the suicide death is wrong, and it’s not fair. Doing that can hurt the other person deeply.”</p> <p>“Suicide is a very personal decision made in a moment of crisis. We cannot blame other people for this decision.”</p>

SECTION 4: RESPONDING TO A STAFF OR STUDENT LOSS IN SCHOOLS (POSTVENTION)

TALKING POINTS	WHAT YOU CAN SAY
<p><b>Do not talk about the method.</b></p> <p>Talking about the method can create images that are upsetting or even traumatizing to individuals.</p> <p>It may also increase the risk of imitative behavior by vulnerable youth.</p>	<p>“Let’s focus on talking about the feelings we are left with now and figure out the best way to manage them.”</p> <p>“It is normal to have questions about the details of what happened. Sometimes it seems like having more information could help us make sense of why this happened. What we know is that discussing the details can be harmful to those around us and disrespectful of the person who died and their family.”</p> <p>“Let’s make sure we are not discussing details of what happened. If you need to talk about this, please reach out to one of our school mental health professionals.”</p>
<p><b>Address anger.</b></p> <p>Accept expressions of anger at the deceased. Help students know these feelings are normal.</p> <p>Encourage healthy expressions of anger while discouraging violent/aggressive behavior.</p>	<p>“It’s okay to feel angry. These feelings are normal, and it doesn’t mean that you didn’t care about _____. You can be angry at someone’s choices and still care deeply about that person.”</p> <p>“It’s important that we don’t lash out at anyone who is feeling angry. There is no ‘right way’ to feel right now.”</p>
<p><b>Normalize all feelings and responses.</b></p> <p>Everyone grieves differently, so you will see a variety of feelings and responses. Some students may feel sad, guilty, angry, confused, shocked, etc.</p> <p>Explain to students that every person grieves differently.</p> <p>Encourage them to accept their own emotions about the event and to accept the emotions of their peers without judgment.</p> <p>Look for warning signs of suicide and report any concerns to an SMHT member immediately.</p>	<p>“Whatever feelings you are having right now are okay.”</p> <p>“There is no ‘right way’ to feel about this. There is no ‘correct’ reaction. Grief is messy.”</p> <p>“We often think our feelings and reactions should ‘make sense’ but the truth is that we can’t make sense of a suicide-loss. We all grieve differently.”</p> <p>“Sometimes the feelings and reactions we have to this kind of loss can feel surprising or unexpected, and that’s normal.”</p> <p>“Even those who didn’t know _____ very well might have strong feelings about this. Suicide-losses can bring up our own personal experiences, so it’s important we don’t judge how other people are reacting.”</p>

SECTION 4: RESPONDING TO A STAFF OR STUDENT LOSS IN SCHOOLS (POSTVENTION)

TALKING POINTS	WHAT YOU CAN SAY
<p><b>Address feelings of responsibility.</b></p> <p>Help students understand that the only person responsible for the suicide is the deceased.</p> <p>Reassure those who have exaggerated feelings of responsibility, such as thinking they should have seen the signs or done something to save the deceased.</p>	<p>“This death is not your fault. We don’t always see the signs because we may not know them all or because the suicidal person may hide them very well.”</p> <p>“We cannot predict a person’s behavior.”</p> <p>“Suicide is a personal decision. The only person who knows why this happened is the person who died.”</p>
<p><b>Encourage help-seeking.</b></p> <p>Encourage students to seek help from a trusted adult if they or a friend are struggling with depression, anxiety, or having thoughts of suicide.</p> <p>Promote the 988 Suicide &amp; Crisis Lifeline.</p>	<p>“I am always here to help you through any problem, no matter what.”</p> <p>“Who are the people you would go to if you or a friend were feeling worried or had thoughts of suicide?”</p> <p>“You can <b>call or text</b> the number <b>9-8-8</b> at any time for any reason. Counselors through 988 are available 24/7 to help with any mental health crisis. It’s free and confidential.”</p>