


**TALK
SAVES
LIVES**


**An Introduction to
Suicide Prevention
for
Jeremy Bullock Safe
Schools Summit**



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

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The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Talk Saves Lives™ is an educational presentation and is intended for informational purposes only. This presentation is not a substitute for professional medical advice or services. You should not use the information in this presentation for diagnosing or treating a health condition. You should consult a physician or other health care professional in all matters relating to your health, and particularly for any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention. Any action on your part in response to the information provided in this presentation is at your discretion. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) makes no representations or warranties with respect to any information offered or provided regarding treatment, action, or application of medication.



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AFSP's mission is to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide.

For more, please see afsp.org

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Mental Health Matters

90%

of people who died by suicide had a mental health condition at the time of their death.

However, most people with mental health conditions do not engage in suicidal behavior or die by suicide.

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Building a Culture that Addresses Suicide Prevention

- Universal education and health promotion
- Healthcare, schools, workplaces, etc.
- Changing social and cultural norms to decrease stigma and encourage help-seeking
- Prevention strategies for those who may be at increased risk
- Treatment and recovery
- Public policy



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What You Will Learn

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Describe the impact of suicide
- Identify contributors to suicide and protective factors
- Understand how suicide may impact certain communities differently
- Describe how to recognize suicide warning signs
- Provide examples of how to start a conversation about suicide with someone you're concerned about
- List ways to seek and offer support and crisis resources for yourself or others

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How We Talk Matters

Avoid saying:

Committed suicide • Failed or successful attempt

Say:

Died by suicide • Ended their life • Suicide attempt • Death by suicide

Common Terms:

- Suicide loss survivor
- Survivor of suicide loss
- Suicide bereaved
- Bereaved by suicide
- Lived experience
- Suicide attempt survivor



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Scope of the Problem

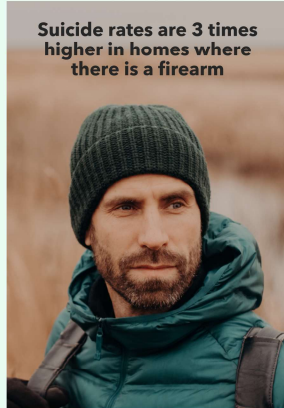
- Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Each year, millions of people think about suicide
- There are well over a million people in the U.S. each year who survive a suicide attempt
- Most people have been affected by suicide in some way

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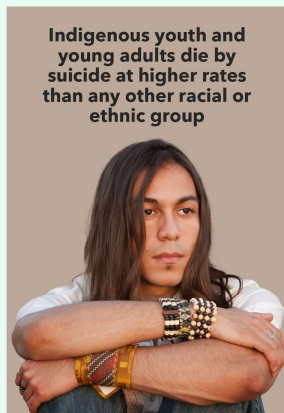
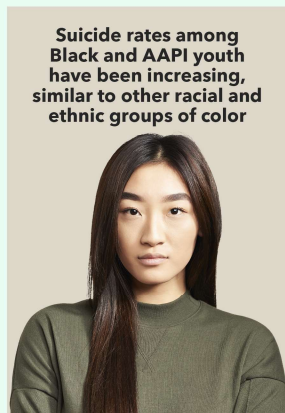
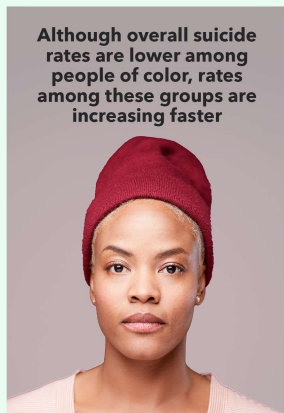
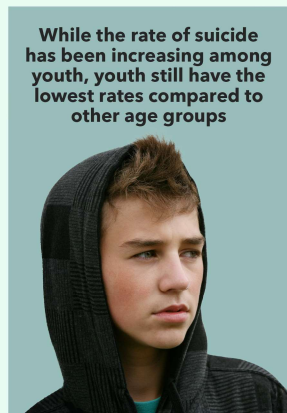
Differences in Suicide Rates

Suicide rates may differ based on a variety of factors, including age, gender, geography, ethnicity, race and occupation.



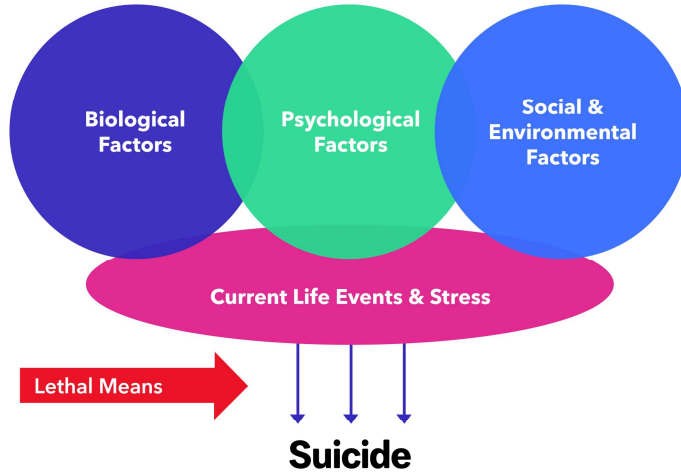
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Differences in Suicide Rates (continued)



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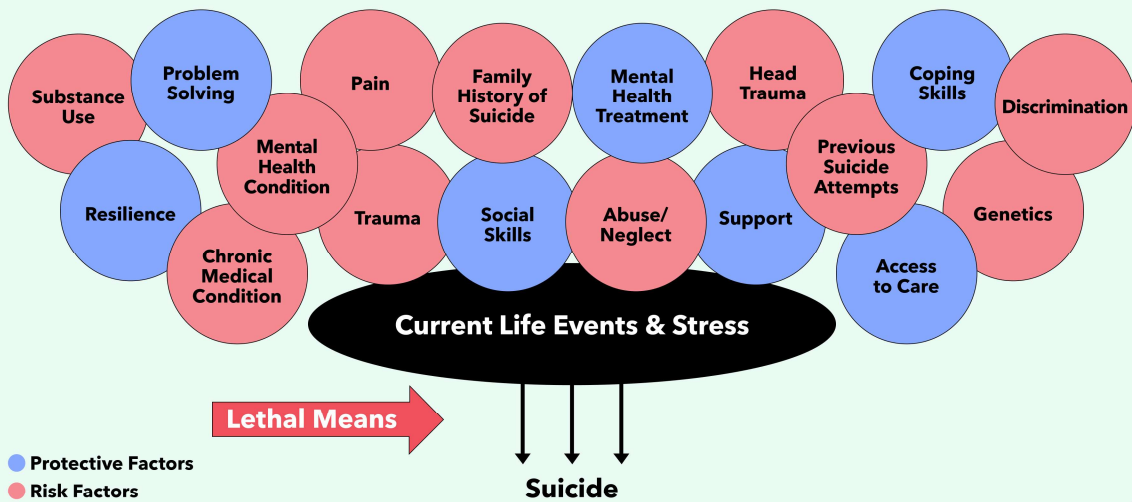
Interacting Risk and Protective Factors



Moutier, C. Y., Harkavy-Friedman, J. M. (2018). Presented at the National Academy Sciences meeting on suicide prevention, Washington, DC.

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Interacting Risk & Protective Factors



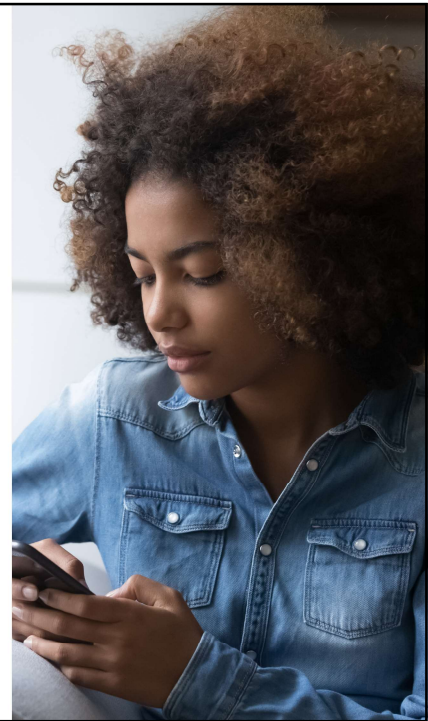
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Contributors to Suicidal Behavior

- Previous suicidal behavior
- Mental health conditions: depression, bipolar disorder, psychosis, personality disorders, eating disorders, substance use
- Physical health conditions, chronic pain
- Family history of mental illness or suicide loss
- Childhood trauma, abuse, neglect
- Traumatic brain injury
- Genetics
- Ongoing social factors: rejection, victimization, race or gender related discrimination, prejudice, systemic racism and historical trauma



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Protective Factors

- Resilience
- Strong sense of personal identity including gender, race, and ethnicity
- Social and problem-solving skills
- Connection
- Social support
- Willingness to participate in mental health care
- Access to mental health care

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Certain groups and populations experience suicide risk factors and contributors differently



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Suicide in LGBTQ+ Individuals

- LGBT individuals have more suicidal ideation and attempts than their heterosexual peers
- Social stigma, prejudice, and discrimination are associated with minoritized sexual orientation
- For LGBT youth, a common and powerful stressor is rejection by parents and other family members

Increasing acceptance and affirmation of LGBTQ+ identities and increasing access to LGBTQ+-affirming physical and mental health care can be protective factors.

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Suicide and Rural Communities

Suicide rates are consistently higher in rural America than in urban America.

Contributors to suicide risk for rural community members include:

- Lack of access to mental health care
- Social isolation
- Substance use
- Socioeconomic factors
- Unexpected environmental impacts (drought, natural disasters, flooding)
- Stigma around mental health and suicide
- Access to firearms

Connectedness in rural communities can amplify both positive (protective) and negative risk factors and experiences.



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Suicide and Indigenous Communities

Indigenous youth and young adults die by suicide at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group.

Contributors to suicide risk in indigenous communities include:

- Lack of access and availability of medical and mental health care, especially culturally responsive mental health professionals
- Present and historical trauma exposure
- Substance use
- Exposure to community violence, racism, and discrimination

Increasing access and availability of culturally relevant care and promoting community engagement and cultural traditions can help protect against suicide risk.



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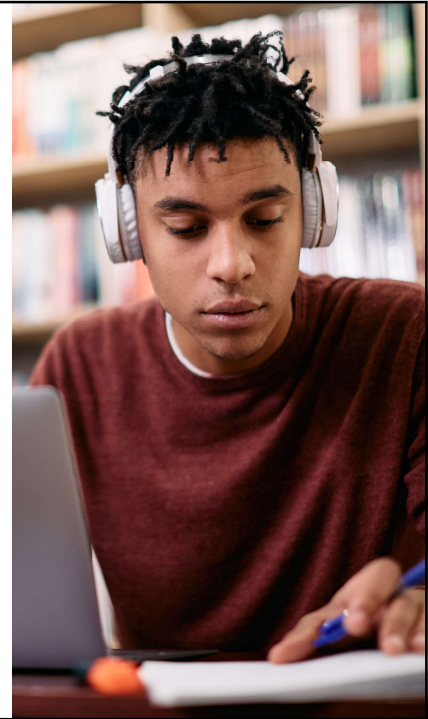
Suicide and College Students

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young adults aged 18-24.

Contributors to suicide risk among college students include:

- Unaddressed mental health and substance use problems
- Life transitions
- Social isolation
- Relationship problems
- Marginalization and discrimination
- Current or previous trauma
- Academic pressure
- Financial stress
- Identity struggles

Protective factors for college students include building strong relationships with peers, mentors and family, practicing healthy habits including mindfulness activities, exercise, monitoring substance use, and sleep hygiene, and utilizing on-campus mental health resources.



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For Parents of LGBTQ Youth

For Parents of LGBTQ Youth



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The Family as a Seatbelt



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Thoughts of Suicide are Complex

- Part of them wants to live, part of them wants their pain to end
- They may think that if they weren't around, it would be better for their family and friends
- They may feel like a burden
- They may feel overwhelmed with hopelessness

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Perspective of a Person in Crisis

- Experience a crisis point
- Unbearable physical or emotional pain that feels unescapable
- Their brain is operating differently; thinking lacks flexibility
- They can't access coping skills
- It's not a choice to feel this way

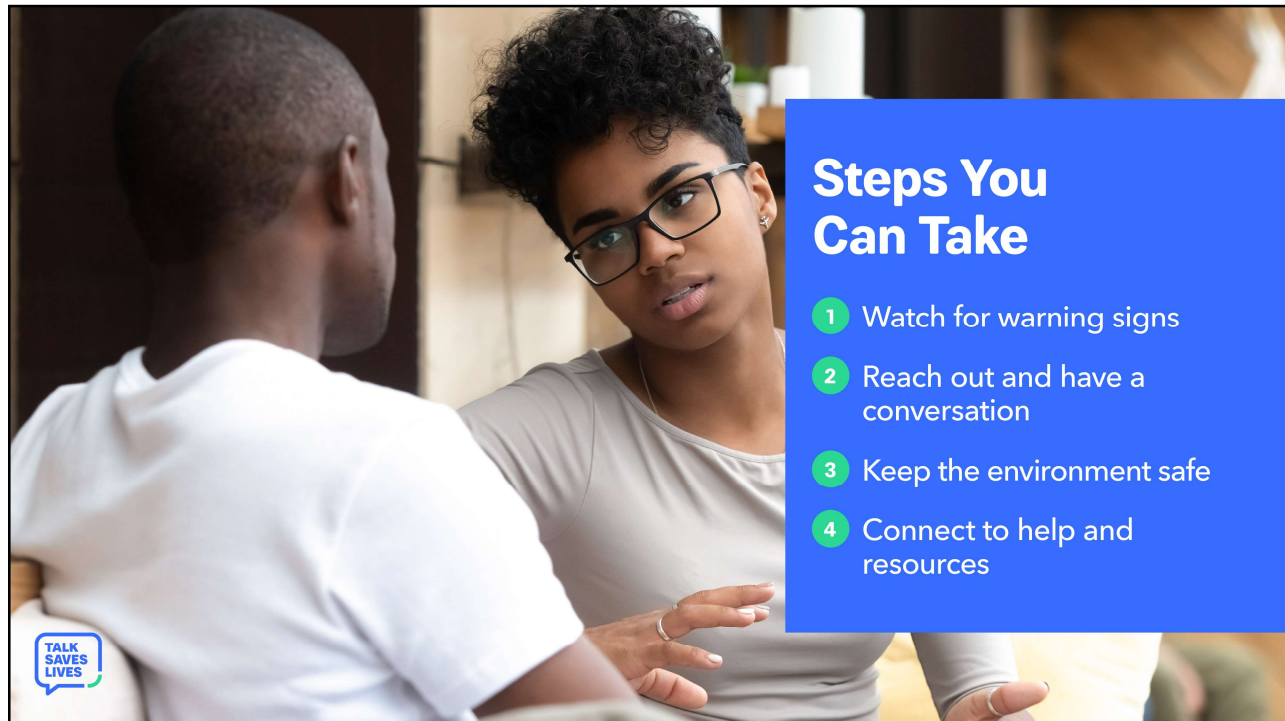


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Thoughts of suicide are often temporary. Keeping people safe and helping them feel supported can get them through those critical moments.



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Steps You Can Take

- 1 Watch for warning signs
- 2 Reach out and have a conversation
- 3 Keep the environment safe
- 4 Connect to help and resources

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Watch for Warning Signs

Suicide Warning Signs

Talk	Behavior	Mood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending their lives • Having no reason to live • Feeling hopeless • Being a burden to others • Feeling trapped • Unbearable pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of alcohol or drugs • Issues with sleep • Acting recklessly • Withdrawing from activities • Isolating from family and friends • Looking for a way to kill themselves • Giving away possessions • Missed work or declining work or school performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Apathy • Rage • Irritability • Impulsivity • Humiliation • Anxiety • Sudden, unexplained happiness

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Have a Conversation

Have a Conversation

- Trust your instinct
- Assume you're the only one who is going to reach out
- Be okay with the awkwardness

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Have a Conversation

Reminders Before You Reach Out

- Avoid minimizing their feelings
- Avoid debating them that life is worth living
- Avoid offering advice on how to "fix" it

Remember, your role is to listen and help them connect to resources

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I care about you, and I've noticed you haven't been yourself lately. You seem more [frustrated] than you've been in a while, and I'm wondering how you're doing.

You are an important [colleague and friend] to me. You don't seem like yourself. I wonder if what's happening [at work] these days is stressing you out. Is everything okay?


I have missed seeing you [at the gym] lately. With everything that's going on [in your family,] I wonder if you're feeling [overwhelmed].

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2 Have a Conversation

Listen with Empathy

- Ask open-ended questions and listen to their response
- Show empathy and support with your words and body language
- Listen for warning signs



How has that made you feel? I hear you and I'm here for you.

That sounds really hard. I'm sorry you're hurting so much.

Are you having a hard time dealing with that? I care about you and want you to be safe.


I see that. I want to help you find the help you need.

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2 Have a Conversation

Ask Directly About Suicide

Research shows that asking about suicide does not put the thought in someone's head. Instead, it can bring relief and can be lifesaving.



You can start with:

Sometimes when people feel like you do, they think of ending their life, are you having those thoughts?

It is important to ask the question directly:

Are you thinking of ending your life?

Are you thinking about suicide?

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2 Have a Conversation

If they're not thinking about suicide, continue to listen and provide support

I care about you and want you to get through this rough time.

I'm sorry you're hurting so much.

Are you getting help from a professional? I want to help you find the help you need.

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2 Have a Conversation

If they are thinking about suicide, find out more

Although a lot of feelings may come up if someone tells you they are thinking about suicide, it is helpful to learn more so you know how best to support them.

Do you have (method)?
Do you have that available?

Do you have a plan to end your life?

Can you give that to me or someone until you get through this difficult time?

I want you to be here and will help you.

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2 Have a Conversation

Next Steps in the Conversation

- Thank them for sharing with you
- Remind them you are here for them
- Connect them with resources
- Stay in touch

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Thank you for sharing with me. Do you want me to help you call your therapist tomorrow before we play basketball?

You know, you've been on my mind since we had that conversation the other day. How are you doing today?

I've really been thinking about what we talked about, and I want to circle back. How are you feeling since we spoke?

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Example Conversation: Talk Away the Dark



Talk away the dark

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Keep the Environment Safe

The most important thing you can put between a person thinking about suicide and their way of ending their life is time.

Time allows the crisis to de-escalate and the opportunity for help.



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Keep the Environment Safe

Help them limit access to lethal means

Examples of how you might restrict lethal means:

- Remove or secure firearms, including decorative firearms (unloaded, locked, and disassembled)
- Store ammunition separately
- Secure medications including over the counter medications
- Secure toxic substances

Additionally, you can:

- Ask what they might need to feel safer
- Encourage them to refrain from substance use
- Encourage them to discuss keeping the environment safe with a mental health professional

"Lethal means" refers to a method that can be fatal if one uses it to attempt suicide.



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Keep the Environment Safe

Suicide and Firearms

- Nearly half of all U.S. households have at least one firearm
- In the U.S., around half of all suicides involve firearms
- In some states, firearms are used in as many as 70% of suicides
- Most firearm deaths are suicides in the U.S.
- If someone is at risk for suicide, having a gun in the house can be fatal



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Connect to Resources

Crisis Resources

If someone has a suicide plan or is in a crisis and not safe, take immediate action.



988
Dial 988; Press 1 for veterans, 2 for Spanish,
3 for LGBTQ
Text 988 (English & Spanish)
988lifeline.org

Crisis Text Line
Text TALK to 741741 for English
Text AYUDA to 741741 for Spanish
crisistextline.org

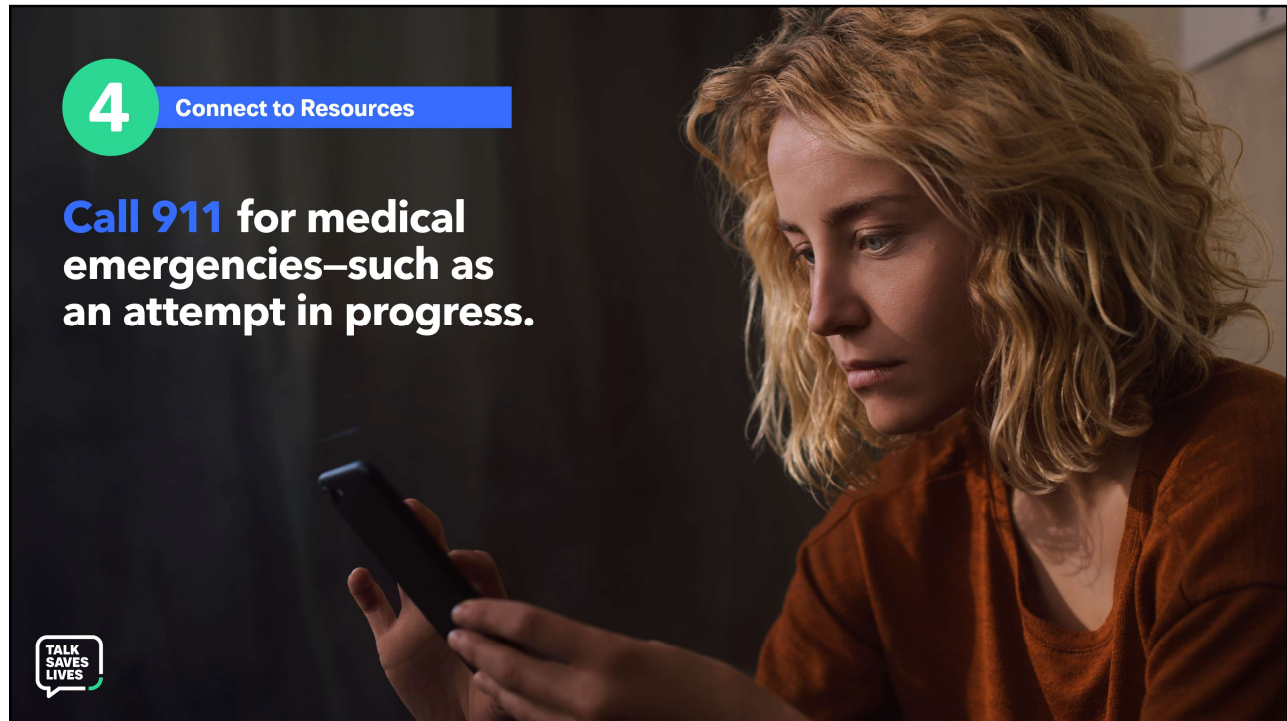
Emergency Department
Help the person get to emergency services

Trevor Project – LGBTQ Youth
1-866-488-7386
Text START to 678-678
thetrevorproject.org

Trans Lifeline
1-877-565-8860
translifeline.org

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4 Connect to Resources

Call 911 for medical emergencies—such as an attempt in progress.

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4 Connect to Resources

Connect to Professional Care

- Visit a mental health or medical provider who can help:
 - [Findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)
 - [Mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help](https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help)
 - [inclusivetherapists.com](https://www.inclusivetherapists.com)
- Get an evaluation
- Discuss treatment options and interventions, such as safety planning, if applicable
- Continue treatment, follow up regularly
- Practice self-care and connect with loved ones and your community

We recognize there are many barriers to receiving mental health care, including a shortage of mental health professionals

TALK SAVES LIVES <https://afsp.org/find-a-mental-health-professional/>

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Connect to Resources

Local Resources

•Healing Conversations

A one-time visit (phone, virtual, in-person) that connects those who have lost a loved one to suicide with trained volunteers who are also survivors of suicide loss. www.afsp.org/healing-conversations

•Tamarack Grief Resource Center

Therapeutic, nature-based programs are grounded in research-supported best practices and designed to help participants feel understood, gain tools, and access hope. (406) 541-8472

•Montana Warm Line

For non-crisis emotional support, call **1-877-688-3377** between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. on weekdays, and from noon to 9 p.m. on weekends.

•Montana 211

Connects individuals to community resources and services across Montana.

•Intermountain- <https://www.intermountain.org/home/>•MT Urban Indian Health Centers: https://tribalnations.mt.gov/_docs/Urban_Centers_1.pdf

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Connect to Resources

Postvention is Prevention:
Resources

Providing support for loss survivors is important and is another way to prevent suicide. Resources include:

AFSP resources and programs available to help you heal

Afsp.org/loss and Afsp.org/get-help

The Dougy Center, The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

Dougy.org

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (military or veteran)

TAPS.org/suicide

Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors

Allianceofhope.org



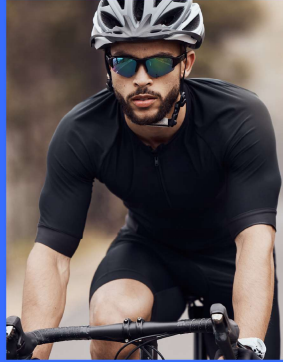
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Prioritize Self-Care

Mind



Body



Soul



Surroundings



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Together, we can create a culture that prioritizes mental health and suicide prevention.



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Why is my Feedback Important?

- Your opinion and experiences are critical
- With your voice, we can better improve our programs
- Your feedback will help us know: Is the program working? What needs to be changed?
- Your feedback is confidential and will not be linked to you

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Help us measure our impact by completing the post survey.

Visit afsp.org/TSLfeedback



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Other Ways to Take Action to Prevent Suicide with Us

- Join your local Chapter
- Become an advocate
- Attend a training to become a volunteer presenter
- Walk in your community
- Partner to bring prevention to your community
- Sponsor an event
- Give a gift
- Engage with our social media accounts

Learn more at afsp.org
[editable link for chapter website]



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Upcoming Chapter Events

Fundraisers

- Gallatin Valley Out of the Darkness Walk – September 7, 2025 (free registration)
- Five Valleys Out of the Darkness Walk – September 13, 2025 (free registration)
- Eastern Montana Out of the Darkness Walk – September 20, 2025 (free registration)
- Yellowstone Valley Out of the Darkness Walk – September 21, 2025 (free registration)
- Flathead Valley Out of the Darkness Walk – September 28, 2025 (free registration)

Loss Survivor Support

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day – November 22, 2025

Education

- Montana Conference on Suicide Prevention – August 5, 2026 – Missoula, MT
(Free CEUs and Conference in person)



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Stay Up to date with your Local Chapter! The Montana Chapter is here for YOU!

Please visit afsp.org/montana for:

- Virtual Program Offerings
- Volunteer Orientation and Opportunities
- Campus Walks
- Out of the Darkness Walks
- And more!



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