

PREVENTING SUICIDE:

information for
journalists and others
writing about suicide



Media reports have the potential to either strengthen or damage suicide prevention efforts. Research shows that while media reports about suicide can increase suicide risk, because of imitative (copycat) suicides, responsible reporting about suicide can help educate the public about suicide and its prevention, offer hope to people at risk, reduce stigma and inspire an open and positive dialogue.

Tips for responsible reporting about suicide

What to do

- Do provide accurate information about where to seek help.
- Do educate the public about the facts of suicide and suicide prevention, without spreading myths.
- Do write about how to cope with life stressors or suicidal thoughts, and include information about how and where to get help.
- Do apply particular caution when reporting on celebrity suicides.
- Do show compassion when interviewing bereaved family or friends.
- Do recognize that you yourself may be affected when reporting on suicide.

What NOT to do

- Don't place stories about suicide in prominent positions in newspapers and on websites and don't unduly repeat stories about suicide.
 - Don't use sensational headlines.
 - Don't use language which sensationalizes or normalizes suicide, or presents it as a constructive solution to problems.
 - Don't explicitly describe the method used.
 - Don't provide details about the site/location.
 - Don't use photographs, video footage or social media links that relate to the circumstances of the suicide.
- Be careful with the language you use.

Language Dos and Don'ts

- Do use "die by suicide" or "take one's own life".
- Don't use "commit suicide" or "complete suicide", as it implies criminality or a success respectively.
- Do use "suicide attempt" or "suicide" or "death by suicide".
- Don't use "a successful suicide attempt" or "an unsuccessful, or failed, suicide attempt".

**More
information**



*Preventing suicide: a resource
for media professionals*

