The Hero in Each of Us: Finding Your Role in Suicide Prevention

Stan Collins
Care of the Soul

“The Greeks told the story of the minotaur, the bull-headed flesh-eating man who lived in the center of the labyrinth. He was a threatening beast, and yet his name was Asterion – Star. I often think of this paradox as I sit with someone with tears in her eyes, searching for some way to deal with a death, a divorce, or a depression. It is a beast, this thing that stirs in the core of her being, but it is also the star of her innermost nature. We have to care for this suffering with extreme reverence so that, in our fear and anger at the beast, we do not overlook the star.”

– Care of the Soul, Thomas Moore
What “causes” suicide?
Recommended language

Use
• Died by suicide
• Attempted suicide

Don’t use
• Committed suicide
• “Successful” or “Unsuccessful” attempts

For more information on effective messaging for suicide prevention, visit: suicidepreventionmessaging.org
How we communicate about suicide may influence a vulnerable person towards suicidal behavior.

SuicidePreventionMessaging.org

“Werther” vs. “Papageno” Effect

Positive messaging about suicide prevention such as coverage of positive coping in adverse circumstances, or information about resources may have protective effects.
Framework for Successful Messaging

Suggestions:
• Provide a resource
• Focus on prevention
• Focus on actions people can take
• Positive narrative
• Avoid ‘normalizing’ statements
• Avoid oversimplifying causes

www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org
What Can Be Done to Prevent Suicide?

- Know the warning signs
- Ask directly about suicide
- Make a safety plan and reduce access to lethal means
- Connect to mental health professional trained in suicide prevention treatments
- Create systems to respond to suicide risk in least restrictive (least traumatizing) way
California Department of Education “Model Youth Suicide Prevention Policy” Recommends:

- Training for all staff
- Specialized training in risk assessment
- Review/update of referral processes
- Vetting and referral of community resources
- Utilization/sharing of crisis resources
- Implement/update re-entry procedures
- Focus on high-risk groups
- Student engagement/education
- Creation of a “postvention plan”
SuicideIsPreventable.org   ElSuicidioEsPrevenible.org
Asking Directly About Suicide

• Are you thinking about suicide?

• Do you have a plan? Have you done anything to begin to carry out this plan (for example, acquiring methods, giving away possessions, research)?

• When was the last time you thought about suicide?
MY3 Features: Safety Plan

- Adapted from Safety Plan by Barbara Stanley & Gregory Brown (2008)
- A tiered plan that provides activities for distraction, and people to call on depending on degree of suicidality
- A tool in your therapeutic relationship; a plan to stay safe for the individual
- Can be emailed to providers
How Can We Restrict or Reduce Access to Lethal Means?

- Place the person in a safer environment
- Put a barrier between the person and the means
- Create time between the person and the means
- Make the means (and an attempt) less lethal

Source: Means Restriction and Means Safety for Preventing Suicide, Anara Guard
Directing Change Program & Film Contest

Youth and young adults submit 60-second films in suicide prevention and mental health matters and explore these topics through the lens of diverse cultures.

- Submission Deadline: March 1
- Cash prizes for winning teams and schools
- Red Carpet Award Ceremony
- Open to youth ages 14-25 and grades 7-12
Learning Methodology

Directing Change integrates pedagogical principles into the filmmaking process so that participants are engaged via all methods of the “learning spectrum”: to see, experience, discuss, and apply. Once created, films are used in schools and communities to raise awareness and start conversations about these topics.

https://vimeo.com/92756723
https://youtu.be/aR7Rgo6tPU0
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFFICLNbQ8
Educational Resources

The Directing Change Program is an evaluated education program that can easily be integrated into classroom, club, or extracurricular activities.

Examples of educational resources:
• Lesson plans
• Short educational films and Prezis about mental health, suicide prevention, and how to help a friend
• Fact sheets
• PowerPoint presentation for schools with lesson plans
• “Getting Started” Prezi presentation and participation booklets
• Prevention programs, staff and parent trainings

http://www.directingchangeCA.org/schools/
Directing Change is effective at:

- Increasing knowledge and skills
- Changing attitudes and behaviors related to mental illness and suicide prevention

“It is remarkable that significant findings persisted even months after the program had ended—with fielding of the survey among participants in the program 3–6 months after completing their film submissions.”
www.DirectingChangeCA.org

On the “For Schools” page you will find the following resources (and more):

- Resources to respond to AB2246
- Information on available trainings
- Lesson plans for engaging youth
- Postvention
- Intervention
- Youth engagement
- Parent engagement
DirectingChangeCA.org
Hold on to what is good,
Even if it’s a handful of earth.
Hold on to what you believe,
Even if it’s a tree that stands by itself.
Hold on to what you must do,
Even if it’s a long way from here.
Hold on to your life,
Even if it’s easier to let go.
Hold on to my hand,
Even if someday I’ll be gone away from you.
— Pueblo Prayer
Resources


