



Top 10 Tips for Reporting on Suicide

1. Do not use the word “committed”; instead, use “died by suicide” or “took his/her life”
2. Always provide helpline information – “If you are in crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741”
3. Do not include details or images of lethal means or method used, which can be triggering for those who are struggling and has shown to cause contagion
4. Do not refer to suicide as a “growing problem”, “epidemic”, or “skyrocketing” as this has shown to cause contagion
5. Exclude graphic depictions of a suicide death or glamorizing method used, avoid details about the location of death, and sharing notes left behind
6. Do not refer to a suicide attempt as “successful,” “unsuccessful” or as a “failed attempt”
7. Avoid reporting that a suicide death was “caused” by a single event, such as a job loss or divorce, since research shows no one takes their life for one single reason, but rather a combination of factors (which you can learn about at url afsp.org/signs) – reporting a “cause” leaves the public with an overly simplistic and misleading understanding of suicide
8. Convey that suicidal thoughts and behaviors can be reduced with the proper mental health support and treatment, and are not weaknesses or flaws
9. Use up-to-date suicide data – AFSP summarizes the most recent CDC data at afsp.org/statistics
10. Share the hopeful message that suicide is preventable in language, tone and images used; when in doubt, contact aobrien@afsp.org for more information or to talk to an expert