TALK SAVES LIVES
An Introduction to Suicide Prevention

Suicide is a health issue.

You can prevent suicide.
Someone dies by suicide every 40 seconds.

In the U.S., suicide is the 10th leading cause of death.
In 2013: 41,149 people died by suicide.

For every suicide... 25 others attempt.
Each suicide leaves behind an average of 115 people.

Suicide has an economic impact. $44 billion per year in the United States.

Research
Why do people take their own lives? There is **no single cause**, but rather multiple intersecting factors.

9 out of 10 people who die by suicide have a mental health condition contributing to their death.

1 in 4 people will suffer from a mental health condition, and most **do not** go on to die by suicide.
Physical Differences
The brains of people who die by suicide differ from those who die from other causes in both structure and function.

Most people who attempt suicide are ambivalent about death.

The Perspective of a Suicidal Person
Crisis point has been reached. Desperate to escape unbearable pain. Thinking becomes irrational.
The Goals of Research

- Biomarkers
- Interventions
- Psychotherapies
- Medication

Who is at risk?

Risk Factors

- Health
- Historical
- Environmental
Health Factors

- Mental health conditions:
  - Depression
  - Personality disorders
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Psychosis
  - Anxiety disorder
  - Substance use disorders

Other Health Factors

- Serious or chronic health conditions
- Serious or chronic pain
- Serious head injuries

Environmental Factors

- Access to lethal means
- Exposure/contagion
- Prolonged stress
- Stressful life event
Historical Factors

- Family history of suicide
- Family history of mental health conditions
- Childhood abuse
- Previous suicide attempts

What others know:

What they may not know:
- Genetic risk
- Depression
- Prolonged stress at work
- Drinking more than usual

Prevention
Protective Factors

- Mental health care
- Family and community support
- Problem-solving skills
- Cultural and religious beliefs

Mental health treatment prevents suicide.

The problem: only 1 in 5 with a mental health condition seeks treatment.

We need a culture where everyone knows to be smart about mental health.
Mental Health Treatment

- Talk Therapies
- Medication

Other Treatments:
- Electroconvulsive Therapies
- Light Therapy
- Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation

The law requires insurance plans to cover mental health services the same as physical health services.

Self Care Strengthens Mental Health

- Exercise
- Healthy diet
- Sleep
- Stress management
Limiting access to means prevents suicide.

Limiting Access to Means

- CO sensors in cars
- Barriers on bridges
- Blister packaging for medication
- Firearm safety

Support for loss survivors and those with lived experience.
Talk

- Ending their lives
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

Behavior

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Insomnia
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Looks for a way to kill themselves
- Giving away possessions

Mood

- Depression
- Apathy
- Rage
- Irritability
- Impulsivity
- Humiliation
- Anxiety
Trust your gut. Assume you’re the only one who is going to reach out.

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How to Reach Out

- Talk to them in private
- Listen to their story
- Express concern and caring
- Ask directly about suicide
- Encourage them to seek mental health services
Avoid minimizing their feelings
Avoid trying to convince them life is worth living
Avoid advice to fix it

If you think they might make an attempt soon.

Stay with them
Help them remove lethal means
Escort them to mental health services

Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK