

Suicide of a Student



Occasionally we find ourselves talking to an individual or even a group of people who have just lost someone young to suicide. Our instinct is to panic when we find this out. We ask ourselves “What do I say?” “Will I make it worse?” Say what you feel, talking about what has happened will only help the healing process.

There are three key points to make when talking after someone has passed from suicide.

1. **Acknowledge the death.** The suicide is an 800-pound gorilla sitting in the room; you will not get anywhere until you acknowledge that someone has died.
2. **Remove the blame.** We do not blame people for dying of cancer, and we should not blame someone for dying from untreated depression or any psychiatric disorder.
3. **Give people permission to grieve.** Allow them to grieve in their own way, in their own time and without judgement.

Talking about suicide shortly after someone has died is very tough, tough to do and tough to hear. Remember it is necessary to aide healing and to prevent this from happening again.

Strategies & Talking Points

- No one is to blame the deceased. You are not there to shame the dead, rather to comfort the living. “This (young) person will be missed, especially by family and friends.”
- Grief from a suicide death is more complex. There are many ways to honor your friend, allow people to find their own way to grieve.
- “It is always sad to lose someone in your community.”
- If someone asks a question you don’t have the answer for, say, “I don’t know.” “People who are experts will have more answers for your questions.”
- Understanding suicide is difficult.
- In a few months it would be good to have a school sponsored information presentation by an organization like SAVE.
- Teachers, parents, and students can all come to a new level of understanding of suicide when you have good information presented to you.