



Discussing Suicide Safely

Tip Sheet

Many of us will be touched by suicide, through our work at AV, or in our personal lives. While it can be difficult, it is important we know how to discuss suicide in a safe and helpful way. Language matters, and what we say can affect those around us. This tip sheet is designed for our people, including adolescents and young adults, wanting to know how to discuss a suicide death or attempt safely.

How to communicate about suicide in a safe and helpful way

It is okay, and normal to want to talk about a suicide death. But the way we talk about it is important.

Try not to be judgemental: Using words that blame, criticise, or criminalise a person who has suicided can hurt their loved ones, and stop others from seeking help out of fear of judgement. It can also reduce help-seeking.

- ❌ Avoid saying 'committed suicide', or describing suicide as "attention-seeking", "cowardly" or "selfish"
- ✅ Do say 'died by suicide' or 'suicided'. Remember that suicide is complex, and we can't read someone else's mind or be certain of their motivations and intentions.

Be mindful of the information you share: Providing details about a suicide is not helpful for other people to hear, especially if they are struggling, and can be needlessly upsetting. Circulating rumours about a suicide is inappropriate and creates confusion.

- ❌ Avoid details of death by suicide or suicide attempts, including method, location or if there is a "hotspot" in a certain area or amongst certain people. Terms such as a "Suicide epidemic" can sensationalise suicide and may be inaccurate, refer instead to the "rates of suicide" Don't repeat anything that seems untrue, or unhelpful to hear.
- ✅ Acknowledge that someone has died of suicide, but don't go into specifics. Instead, share information on suicide prevention, including helpful online resources from Headspace and Beyond Blue and support lines such as Lifeline and Kids Helpline.

Highlight the positives of recovery, not suicide: Try not to use language that glamourises or romanticises suicide, or makes it seem like a positive outcome for the person. Doing

The **Ambulance Victoria Wellbeing & Support Services** is AV's internal mental health support service available 24/7 to all employees and their immediate family members, RANs, ACO's and CERTs providing 24-hour mental health and wellbeing support.

Social Media Tips

A lot of our communication is now done online via social media. Before you like, post or share, here are some Dos and Don'ts:

- Do share suicide prevention information from reputable sources
- Don't spread rumours or share information if you're unsure of its accuracy
- Don't like posts that might imply someone is at-risk (e.g. 'I can't live without you')
- Do tell an adult or professional immediately if you see a post that worries you

Do remember that once something is on the internet, it is there forever. Be clear about why you are posting something (is it safe and helpful?) before you do it.

Helpful Resources

- Headspace - <https://headspace.org.au/>
- Beyond Blue - <https://beyondblue.org.au>
- Lifeline - <https://www.lifeline.org.au/131114>



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so might inadvertently encourage other vulnerable people to engage in suicidal thinking or behaviour.

- ❌ Avoid describing suicide as a “relief”, or way to “stop the pain”. Avoid oversimplifying why someone suicided, including implying that it was a solution to a problem.
- ✅ Remind others that there are usually many factors contributing to a person’s suicide. Encourage hope, and highlight that treatment and recovery from mental health struggles is possible; there are always options and support is always available. But it is important to manage your workload and give yourself permission to ‘switch off’, or disconnect. It is also important to implement some relaxation and mindfulness strategies as part of your wind down routine. Practiced regularly, mindfulness practices help to press pause, and tune into your mind and body so that you can recognise earlier on when things begin to feel overwhelming. The key to getting restful sleep lies more your daily habits than sleep related behaviours. Sleep hygiene is important, but so is your lifestyle: noticing how often you run on nervous energy, and allowing yourself the time to stop and pause, are just as important.

- Kids Helpline
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
1800 55 1800

Visit our Family Website

<https://avfamilysafe.com/>

Email for VACU support

vacu@ambulance.vic.gov.au

References

Information adapted from: Robinson, J., Hill, N., Thorn, P., Teh, Z., Battersby, R., & Reavley, N., #chatsafe: A young person’s guide for communicating safely online about suicide. Melbourne: Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, 2018.

Want to Know More?

You can find more resources and helpful information on this topic on the Wellbeing and Support Services **Links and Resources** Intranet page and also in our **Videos and Podcasts**.



**1800
MANERS**

1800 626 377



Option

- 1 **Peer Support**
Talk to a caring, trained colleague who understands your experiences.
peer.support@ambulance.vic.gov.au
- 2 **VACU Counselling Line**
Confidential telephone support from a qualified counsellor (24/7).
Find your nearest VACU Network Clinician.
vacu@ambulance.vic.gov.au
- 3 **AV Chaplain**
AV's Chaplains provide compassionate support for your emotional, spiritual and pastoral care needs. This is a non-denominational service for everyone.
chaplain@ambulance.vic.gov.au
- 4 **Bullying and Harassment**
Confidential support and advice about bullying or harassment.
ProfessionalConductUnit@ambulance.vic.gov.au
- 5 **Police Statements & Court Attendance**
Get help with police statements or an upcoming court appearance.
- 6 **Alcohol and Other Drugs Advice and Support**
Talk with AV's AOD advisor about your options for support (8am-5pm).
AOD@ambulance.vic.gov.au