Safe language

The words we use when we talk about suicide can impact whether a conversation is helpful or harmful. Here are some ways you can talk about suicide safely.

Unsafe communication	Safe alternatives	Why?
"committed suicide"	"took their own life" "died by suicide"	"Committed" has criminal or sinful connotations that can increase stigma around suicide.
"successful suicide" "their suffering has ended"	"suicide death" "they died by suicide"	Describing a suicide as "successful" or as a solution to problems or stressors implies that something positive has been achieved, even though suicide is a tragic outcome.
"unsuccessful suicide" "failed attempt"	"suicide attempt" "non-fatal attempt"	"Unsuccessful" or "failed attempts" suggest that the person has not achieved a desired outcome.
Judgemental or minimising comments, e.g. "you're just an attention seeker" "not this again"	Take conversations about suicide seriously and use non-judgemental language when talking to someone who has experienced suicidal thoughts or attempts.	Talking in ways that are judgemental or minimise a person's experiences can make them feel more isolated and less likely to try to get help if they need it.
Encouraging self-harm or suicide, e.g. "KYS" "what are you waiting for?"	Don't joke about or encourage self-harm or suicide. If you see other people making these comments, remind them that the things they say can be harmful.	People may act on comments encouraging self-harm or suicidal behaviour. Even if you mean these comments as a joke or in a light-hearted way, they can be very harmful to people who hear or read them.
Providing detailed information or images about a suicide or suicide attempt, e.g. information/photos about the method or location.	Reconsider whether it's necessary to mention any details about a suicide death or suicide attempt, and avoid including details if possible. Use broad or general terms instead.	Detailed information or images about self-harm or suicide can be distressing to people who see or hear it, and may also lead to copycat behaviour.

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