Talking About Suicide

Even the word “suicide” can be difficult to say. There is a lot of fear associated with that word. There are also a lot of misconceptions about suicide.

When talking about suicide, most important is to be informed. It is easier to talk about something you know about. You never know when the subject may come up. It may be a celebrity who has taken his own life. It may be someone in your community. It could be the storyline in a movie. A friend or family member may be going through a difficult time. Don’t be afraid to talk about suicide out in the open.

- **Know the myths. Know the facts.**
  - Learn about suicide and depression. A good place to start is suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

- **Use appropriate language.**
  - Avoid saying “committed suicide” because it is not like committing a crime. Suicide is a health issue. It is usually the result of not getting treatment for an underlying condition like depression, prolonged or intense stress, substance addiction, or other medical condition.
  - Avoid referring to attempts as “failed” or “successful” because it makes suicide the goal when the goal should be getting the person in crisis help.
  - Avoid using words that glamorize suicide.

- **Use appropriate tone.**
  - Avoid overreacting or dramatizing suicide. Be calm when talking about suicide.

- **Don’t be afraid to ask.**
  - Research has shown that asking someone in crisis about their intentions or plans does not encourage them to do it.
  - The information may be useful in responding to a crisis. If the person is thinking about using a gun, for example, it may be possible to have the guns removed from the house.

- **Have the phone number for the National Suicide Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 with you.**
  - You don’t need to respond to a crisis alone. Lifeline provides professional support 24/7.
  - If anyone is in immediate danger, don’t be afraid to call 911.

Suicide is very much preventable. For more information, go to HelpHimStay.org.