













Safe Language Around Suicide

Language shapes how we understand suicide. Stigmatizing words can create shame and silence, while compassionate language encourages support and hope. Safe language frames suicide as a health issue, reduces stigma, and fosters healing conversations. It does not minimize the seriousness of suicide but opens space for help-seeking and recovery.

 AVOID SAYING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Committed suicide Because “committed” indicates sin/crime <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Completed suicide This can sound like an achievement <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Unsuccessful/failed attempt The idea of failure can shame survivors <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Victim of suicide It’s best to use person-first language <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Suicide threat Focus on what they are going through 	 PREFERRED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Died by suicide <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Died by suicide <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Non fatal attempt / survived a suicide attempt <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Person who died by suicide <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">  Experiencing suicidal thoughts/intent
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How to Use Safe Messaging Principles

Avoid the following:

- Sharing details about the method or location
- Describing suicide as inevitable, unexplainable, or caused by a single event
- Using shame, guilt, or fear-based appeals to motivate individuals to act or seek help
- Glamorizing or dramatizing suicide in storytelling, visuals, or permanent memorials
- Oversaturating an audience with statistics that may overwhelm or desensitize

Preferred best practices:

- Emphasize that suicide is preventable and help is always available
- Center stories around hope, recovery, and resilience
- Share crisis resources in every message, such as calling 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Normalize mental health support and help seeking
- Use content warnings when appropriate