

Suicide and The Role of The Media

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE ON SUICIDE



Background

Research shows that media portrayals of suicide and suicide prevention can have an impact on others. The World Health Organization recommends media initiatives and collaborations and evidence-based approaches as essential to suicide prevention. This is because media reports about suicidal behaviours can trigger additional suicides, known as the so-called Werther effect.

World Suicide Prevention Day is a perfect opportunity to provide the public with media stories about suicide prevention, particularly with stories that portray how individuals can seek and effectively get help for suicidal thoughts, how they can get back into life after a suicide attempt, recover from a loss of a loved one or how they can assist others who might be suicidal.

Such narratives are entirely different from ordinary media stories on suicide, as they offer a more positive narrative of hope, and they can help others in coping with their crises.

Best practice recommendations are available to assist in the crafting of such stories, and these recommendations can also assist in instances when the reporting is about suicide, for example celebrity suicides. These guidelines should always be used when reporting on suicide or suicide prevention

These media stories of individuals who managed to cope are essential in that they can highlight ways of dealing with crisis in suicidal ideation to others affected by suicidal thoughts, and they offer HOPE.

How Can I Get Involved?

Those working in the media can take action and lead the way in responsible and supportive conversations surrounding suicide, and importantly they can also support each other through open dialogue. With many people affected by suicide, either directly or indirectly, there are numerous stories of personal coping and healing that can be shared that might help others in serious life crises and affected by suicidal ideation and suicide. **By changing the narrative, the media can help prevent suicide.**

Key Points



The media has a powerful role in shaping public understanding and can be instrumental in Changing the Narrative on Suicide.



By reporting responsibly, the media can help;

- Reduce stigma
- Promote awareness and understanding
- Encourage open conversations
- Support help-seeking
- Highlight stories of hope and recovery.

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Take Action

The media can encourage everyone to take action. Media can help create opportunities and lead by telling stories in a responsible and safe way, and by telling stories of hope and recovery.

- Follow the WHO best practice for safe reporting guidelines
- Help the public better understand suicide and suicide prevention warning signs
- Give the public credible, reliable information and resources for reaching out to help and how to talk about suicide safely



Resources

The insights and stories of people with a lived experience of suicide can be extremely powerful in helping others understand suicide better and encourage people to reach in to support someone, and for individuals to reach out for help themselves. Many such stories are shared via media, including social media. It is important that the person sharing their story knows how to do so in a way that is safe for them and for those who hear their story.



For resources on how to talk about suicide please see:

- [WHO \(2023\) Preventing suicide: a resource for media professionals.](#)
- [The #chatsafe guidelines for communicating safely online about suicide](#)
- [Samaritans' media guidelines](#)
- [Reporting on suicide](#)

