

## Talking About & Dealing with Suicide Tip Sheet

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In one way or another, suicide impacts everyone There is about 1 death every 11 minutes from suicide in the U.S (Michigan is about average for the U.S.)<sup>1</sup>

**For imminent safety issues always  
contact 911 and the Crisis Line 988.**

- **For family and friends who have lost someone to suicide:**
  - Do not place blame - it is not your fault.
  - Accept your Emotions - Expect to have to manage traumatic grief and ambiguous loss.
    - Avoid searching for details or reasons.
    - Grief will be a process, expect setbacks, acknowledge uncertainty, and be present for the long-haul.
    - Do not worry about what you "should" feel or do
  - Talk to a professional - Get help and support from a psychologist or other mental health professional whom will aide you in finding helpful and healthy coping tools
  - Draw on existing support systems - Reach out to others affected and check in on them as well.
  - Join a community – support groups can help process emotions alongside others who have experienced similar feelings
  
- **For talking with and supporting kids who have lost someone to suicide:**
  - Manage your own feelings first.
  - Be honest (using age-appropriate language).
    - Consider developmental level, circumstances, and level of ability for you as the adult to manage your own feelings.
  - Validate feelings.
  - Avoid rumors.
  - Tailor support to child's needs.
  - Help them extend their own support (i.e. ask who they can talk to at school and how that person could support them).
  - Handle school announcements with care (avoid PA).
  - Identify students who need more support.
  - Prevent imitation and minimize positive attention.
    - Avoid statements regarding the person being no longer troubled, statements that potentially glorify or romanticize their actions
  - Generally mindful about how your words can impact others.
  - Choose words carefully and focus on the positive aspects of the person's life.
    - It is appropriate to use "Suicide". "suicidal thoughts or ideation". "completed suicide". "attempted suicide", "ended their own life or took their own life.", "died by suicide" and similar terms.
    - Avoid terms that are incorrect, imply accomplishment, or are subjective (i.e. "committed suicide" is a legal term and the act or attempt has changed from a criminal to a civil issue. Another example of wording to avoid: "Successful attempt"
  - Keep communication open.

[www.wedgwood.org/services/counseling-services](http://www.wedgwood.org/services/counseling-services) | 616.942.7294

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