Changing the Narrative: Doing it Right in News and Entertainment

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What journalism and entertainment can offer...
Contagion isn’t the only issue

• Coverage only of certain deaths only (youth, for instance) masks the true public health problem in the community.
• Myths can be reinforced by incomplete coverage and by the quotes included.
• You can have a **positive** influence: promoting helpful resources and that suicide can be **prevented**
Journalism: doing it right

• Avoid graphic depiction of means
• Language matters
• Include helpful resources, such as crisis hotlines and warmlines
• Interview experts, not just neighbors
• Set policy in your newsroom
• Tell stories of recovery, coping, resiliency (the heroic journey) not just tragedy
• Don’t cover suicide the same way as crimes
13 semis line Detroit freeway to help man considering suicide

Last truck pulls up to I-696 police situation

OAK PARK, Mich. (WJBK) - If you or a loved one is feeling distressed, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The crisis center provides free and confidential emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to civilians and veterans. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Or text to 741-741

CLICK HERE for the warning signs and risk factors of suicide. Call 1-800-273-TALK for free and confidential emotional support.
Use these resources to guide your reporting

*Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide [www.reportingonsuicide.org](http://www.reportingonsuicide.org)
  • Positive examples found there as well

Your AP Stylebook: entries on suicide and mental illness

[https://dartcenter.org/topic/suicide](https://dartcenter.org/topic/suicide)

[www.bloggingonsuicide.org](http://www.bloggingonsuicide.org)

[www/reportingonmassshootings.org](http://www/reportingonmassshootings.org)

*FREE* Poynter online course: Reporting on Mental Health Conditions and Suicide

[https://www.newsu.org/reporting-mental-health-suicide](https://www.newsu.org/reporting-mental-health-suicide)
Entertainment: getting it right

• Avoid graphic depictions of means
• Suicide isn’t the inevitable outcome of a dilemma
• Language matters. “Person first”; problem second
• Consult with experts as you develop your story
• Consider including a heroic tale of recovery and/or seeking help
• Including resources is always helpful
• Recognize in your storyline that suicide has consequences
Use these resources when creating entertainment

Framework for Successful Messaging
www.suicidepreventionmessaging.org

VOICE Awards criteria: www.samhsa.gov/voice-awards/about

EIC’s Picture This: Depression and Suicide Prevention
www.eiconline.org/resources/publications/z_picturethis/Disorder.pdf
The power of an effective storyline...


View dozens of 60-second films created by young filmmakers
http://www.directingchange.org/main/films/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17OYLzMV8_g
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVwwOX9Cvlk
Social media: getting it right

• Tools to anonymously report a friend’s post about self-harm (Facebook, Instagram)

• Tools to access helplines

• Suggestions and tips to help a friend or get support

• Algorithms and AI that automatically post Lifeline information

• Twitter, FB and others have information in their Help Centers

• The Recommendations still hold for your own tweets and posts!

Thank you

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