



Changing the Narrative: Doing it Right in News and Entertainment



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTING ON SUICIDE

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR COVERING SUICIDE

- More than 50 research studies worldwide have found that certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals. The magnitude of the increase is related to the amount, duration and prominence of coverage.
- Risk of additional suicides increases when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images, and repeated/briefcase coverage sensationalizes or glamorizes a death.
- Covering suicide carefully, even briefly, can change public misperceptions and correct myths, which can encourage those who are vulnerable or at risk to seek help.

Suicide is a public health issue. Media and online coverage of suicide should be informed by using best practices. Some suicide deaths may be newsworthy. However, the way media covers suicide can influence behavior negatively by contributing to contagion or positively by encouraging help-seeking.

References and additional information can be found at: www.ReportingOnSuicide.org.

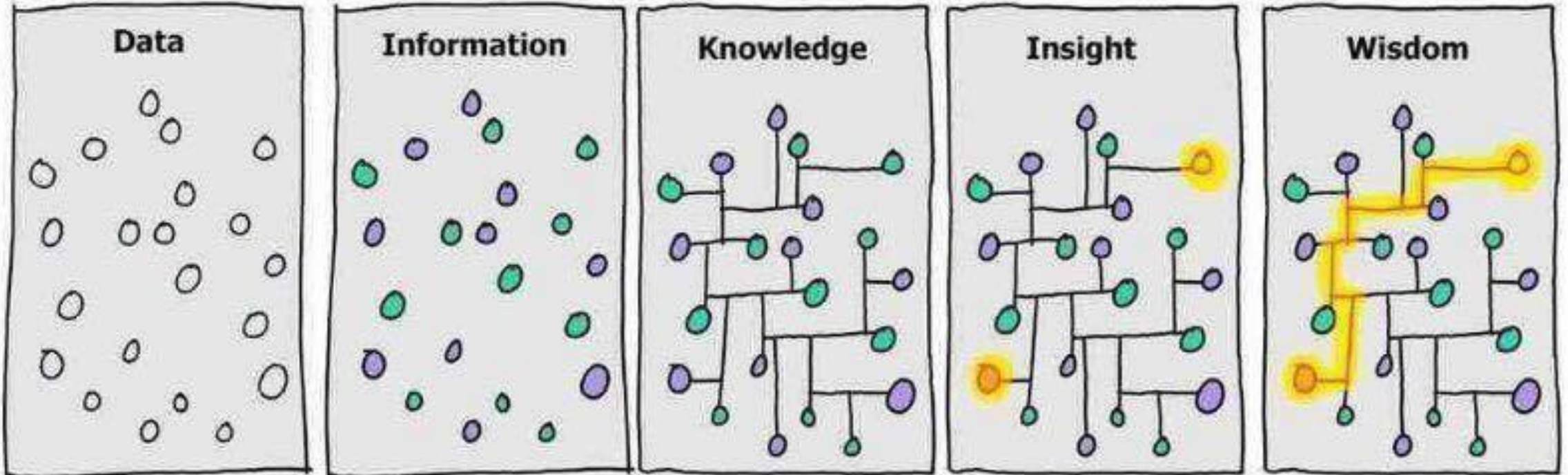
INSTEAD OF THIS: ❌	DO THIS: ✅
• Big or sensationalistic headlines, or prominent placement (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Used Shotgun to Commit Suicide").	• Less reporting informs without sensationalizing the event (e.g., "Kurt Cobain Dead at 27").
• "John Doe left a suicide note saying..."	• "A note from the deceased was found and is being reviewed by the medical examiner."
• Including photos/videos of the location or method of death, grieving family, friends, memorials or funerals.	• Use school/work or family photos; include helpline logs or local crisis phone numbers.
• Describing recent suicides as an "epidemic," "skyrocketing," or other strong terms.	• Carefully investigate the most recent CDC data and use non-sensational words like "true" or "tragic."
• Describing a suicide as inevitable or "without warning."	• Most, but not all, people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs. Include the "Warning Signs" and "What to Do" sidebar (item 2) in your article if possible.
• Investigating and reporting on suicide similar to reporting on crimes.	• Report on suicide as a public health issue.
• Quoting/interviewing police or first responders about the causes of suicide.	• Seek advice from suicide prevention experts.
• Referring to suicide as "successful," "unsuccessful" or a "failed attempt."	• Describe as "died by suicide" or "completed" or "failed attempt."

Anara Guard
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What journalism and entertainment can offer...



Contagion isn't the only issue

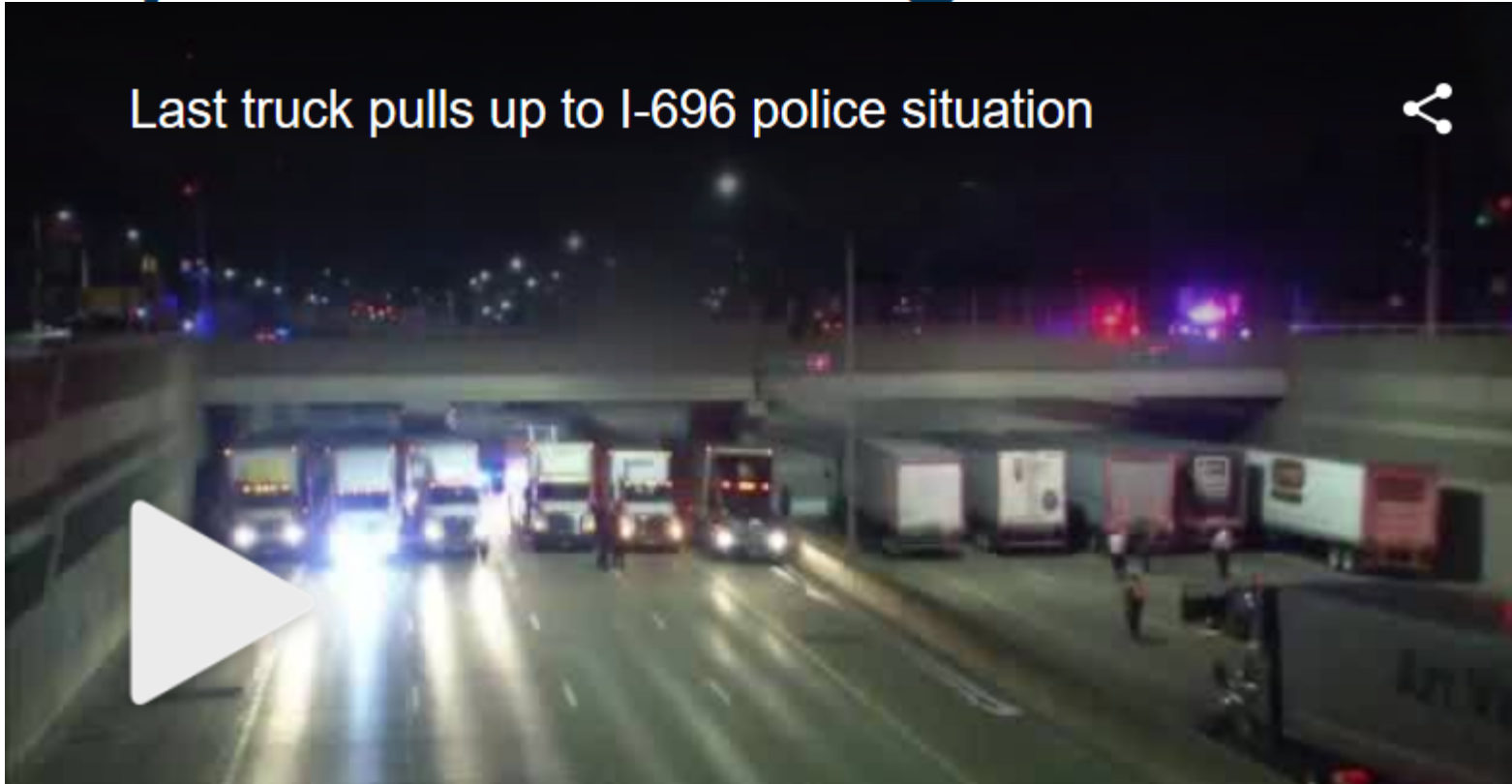
- Coverage only of certain deaths only (youth, for instance) masks the true public health problem in the community.
- Myths can be reinforced by incomplete coverage and by the quotes included.
- You can have a **positive** influence: promoting helpful resources and that suicide can be **prevented**

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

TEXT



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

HELP

[CLICK HERE](#) for the warning signs and risk factors of suicide. Call 1-800-273-TALK for free and confidential emotional support.

LEARN

Use these resources to guide your reporting

*Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide www.reportingonsuicide.org

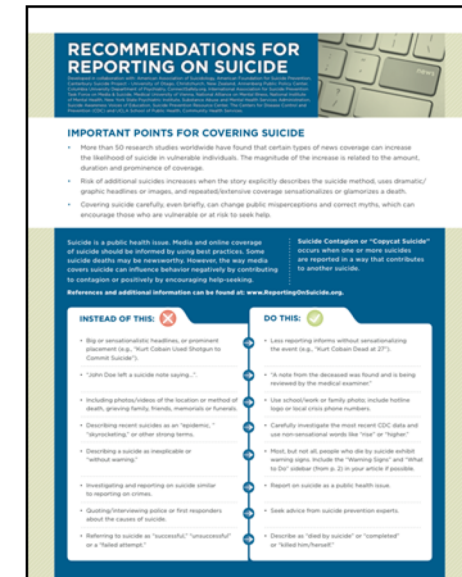
- Positive examples found there as well

Your AP Stylebook: entries on suicide and mental illness

<https://dartcenter.org/topic/suicide>

www.bloggingsuicide.org

www.reportingonmassshootings.org



FREE Poynter online course: Reporting on Mental Health Conditions and 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...

<http://eicnetwork.tv/Videos/HealthWellness/HWScreeningRoom/TabId/871/Videoid/637/Michael-Cudlitz-Accepts-A-PRISM-Award.aspx>

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=JVwwOX9CvIk>

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!
- <http://www.eiconline.org/teamup/wp-content/files/teamup-mental-health-social-media-guidelines.pdf>

Thank you



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