



Mindframe: Quick reference guide for public communication about suicide

This quick reference guide has been developed to support anyone communicating about suicide in a public setting to do so in a safe and sensitive way. People who may be communicating about suicide include:

- Media
- Police
- Spokespeople to media
- Organisations who work with community, e.g. schools, health services
- Government
- Community members.

The way we communicate about suicide can have an impact on the future suicidal behaviour of others, as well as contribute to stigma.

The words and images we use to communicate about suicide, have the potential to isolate people and reinforce stigma, or it can engage and empower people to seek and offer support.

Problematic communication is associated with increased rates of suicide and suicide attempts. Increased risk is seen when certain information is included, such as the method or location of a death or attempt, information that might allow someone to identify with the person who has died, or sensationalised communications.

On the other hand, sharing stories of people who have overcome a suicidal crisis, or sharing 'alternatives' to suicide can help prevent suicide.

For more detail and context, access the full suite of *Mindframe* guidelines, and other resources [here](#).



Always consider the impact of language and images on the people that you are communicating about, as well as the impact it may have on others.

Key guidance for communicating about suicide

- Use language that is non-stigmatising and does not suggest suicide is a desired outcome.
- Avoid details (including images) about the method or location of a suicide attempt or death, including new or unusual methods.
- There may be situations where communicating about a suicide method is needed (for example, restricting access to means or in policy discussions). In these cases, mention it in general terms only rather than explicit details.
- Take care when describing a location, even in general terms, that method is not inferred.
- There may be cases where referring to a public location is needed (for example, if areas are closed to the public). In these cases, avoid linking the location to a suicide, or mention it in general terms only.
- Encourage help-seeking and help-offering by providing the details of at least two 24/7 appropriate sources of support. This helps remind people who may be impacted that help is available.
- Language and image choice is a key part of ensuring your communication is safe, sensitive and reduces stigma. Further guidance on word and image choice is provided in the tables on the following page.

Language guidance

Choosing language that reflects and empowers individual experiences, is not sensationalised, is understandable and is adapted to individual preferences or audience is recommended.

Preferred	Problematic
✔ Died by suicide; took their own life	✘ Successful suicide; completed suicide; committed suicide
✔ Suicide attempt; attempted to end their life	✘ Unsuccessful suicide; failed suicide bid
✔ Increased rates of suicide; higher rates of suicide	✘ Skyrocketing rate of suicide; suicide epidemic
✔ A person who attempted or died by suicide; he died by suicide	✘ Labelling terms associated with suicide methods
✔ Tragic death; a tragedy	✘ Set free; finally at peace; can rest at last
✔ Refraining from using the term 'suicide' out of context	✘ Political suicide; suicide pass/ball (in sports); suicide mission
✔ Content advice; the content includes discussion of suicide	✘ Trigger warning; triggered

Image guidance

Using diverse images, seeking permission before using images of a person with lived experience, and using images that are hopeful and encourage help-seeking is recommended.

Preferred	Problematic
✔ Images that avoid showing specific locations where suicides have occurred	✘ Showing specific locations where suicides have occurred can lead to further suicide attempts, or deaths at similar locations
✔ Images that do not include specific methods of suicide	✘ Showing specific methods or implements that may be used in suicide or self-harm (e.g. images of specific drugs or medications) can increase risk of further suicidal behaviour
✔ An image including older scars or healed wounds, indicating hope and recovery	✘ Showing close-up images focused on an example of self-harm (e.g. images of specific drugs or medications) can increase risk of further suicidal behaviour
✔ Design elements that indicate hope, or represent nature, people or connection	✘ Design elements that could indicate a method of suicide (e.g. patterns that look like rope) can be distressing