

Words matter.

Learning how to talk about suicide in a hopeful, respectful way has the power to save lives.

Instead of This....	Say This.....	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commit/committed a suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • died by suicide/death by suicide/lost their life to suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “commit” implies suicide is a crime, reinforcing the stigma that it’s a selfish act and personal choice • using neutral phrasing like “died by suicide” helps strip away the shame/blame element
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • successful/unsuccessful suicide • completed/failed suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • died by suicide / survived a suicide attempt / lived through a suicide attempt • fatal suicidal behavior / non-fatal suicidal behavior • fatal suicide attempt/non-fatal suicide attempt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the notion of a “successful” suicide is inappropriate because it frames a very tragic outcome as an achievement or something positive • to be matter-of-fact, a suicide attempt is either fatal or not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • epidemic, skyrocketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rising, increasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words like “epidemic” can spark panic, making suicide seem inevitable or more common than it actually is • by using purely quantitative, less emotionally charged terms like “rising”, we can avoid instilling a sense of doom or hopelessness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <Name> is suicidal • Is a suicide attempter • Has suicide ideation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <Name> is facing suicide / is thinking of suicide / has suffered through suicidal thoughts / has experienced suicidal thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we don’t want to define someone by their experience with suicide; they are more than their suicidal thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He’s suicidal • They’re a schizophrenic • She’s bipolar • The mentally ill • <substance> addicts • Manipulative, cry for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • he is facing suicide / thinking of suicide / experiencing suicidal thoughts • they have schizophrenia / are living with schizophrenia • people with mental illness • people addicted to <substance>, people with addiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • putting the condition before the person reduces someone’s identity to their diagnosis— people aren’t their illness; they <i>have</i> an illness • people-first language shows respect for the individual, reinforcing the fact that their condition does not define them

These recommendations have been informed by the Canadian Psychiatric Association’s *Media Guidelines for Reporting on Suicide*.