

Suicide and the Working Environment

WITH DR. KATHLEEN STEPHANY
DOUGLAS COLLEGE



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

Sensitive Content Ahead

Dr. Kathleen Stephany

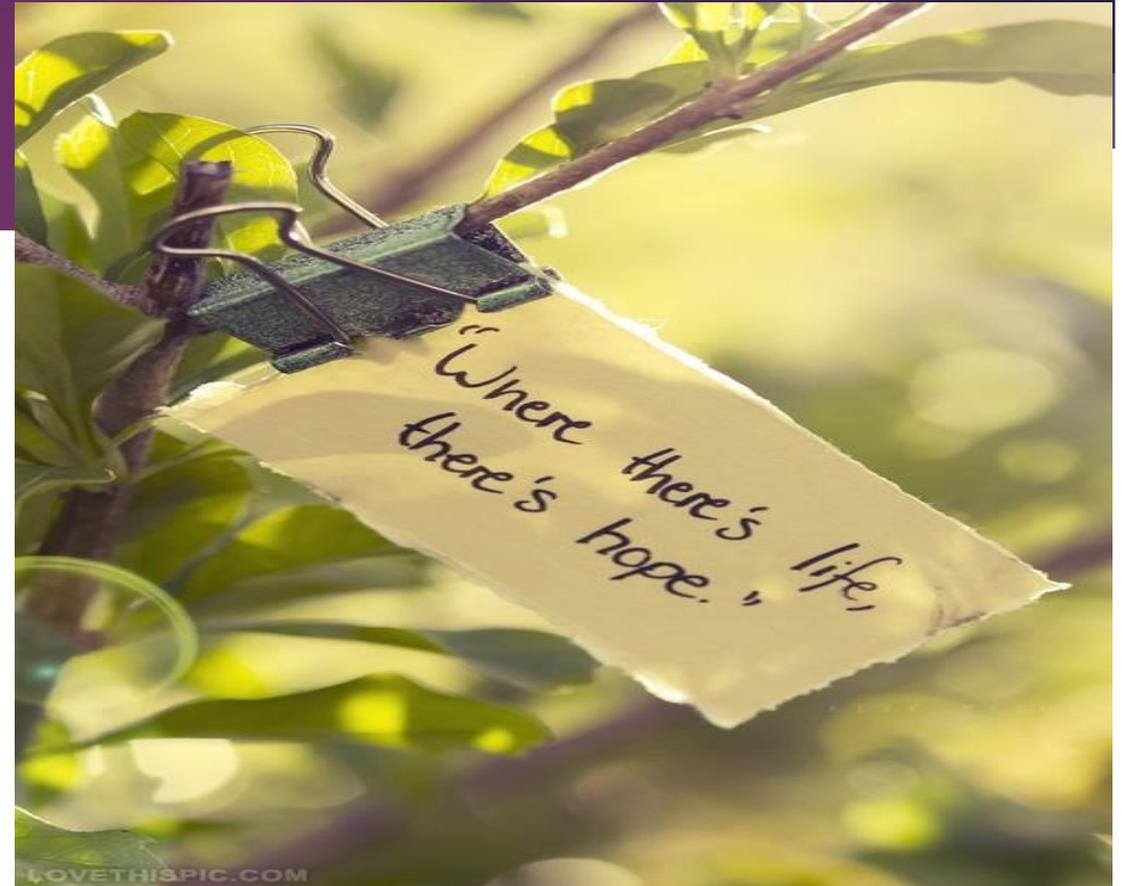


- **RN, BScN, BA, MA, PhD, CCC, Psychologist**
- **Faculty of Nursing, Douglas College**
- Member of Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (**CASP**) and International Association for Suicide Prevention (**IASP**)
- *How to help the suicidal person choose life: The ethic of care and empathy as indispensable tools for intervention*



POLL #1

Practical information and insights on how to help someone who is considering suicide



We can all do something to help someone who is suicidal

- ▶ Every one of us can learn how to do something that will help someone who is suicidal.
- ▶ You don't need to be a health professional!
- ▶ You just need a few tools or skills.



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Overview and what you can expect to learn

- 1) Reasons why we avoid the subject of suicide.
- 2) Some key risk factors for suicide and warning signs.
- 3) How to ask the question, “Are you having thoughts about suicide?”
- 4) What is not helpful vs. what is helpful.
- 5) How to connect the suicidal person to support.
- 6) Ways that an employer, employee, organization or school campus can help.
- 7) The importance of self-care.
- 8) A short role-play on how to help someone who is suicidal.

POLL #2

Why do we avoid the “S” word?

- ▶ The topic of suicide can result in many emotional reactions, including fear and shame.
- ▶ You may feel very uncomfortable with the subject.
- ▶ You may have lost someone to suicide.
- ▶ You may be part of a religion or faith that depicts suicide negatively.
- ▶ You would rather talk about something else.
- ▶ You are afraid that talking about suicide might cause harm.
- ▶ Other reasons for avoiding the subject of suicide.

What is important for you to know?

- ▶ It is helpful for you to understand risk factors and warning signs, and how to connect a person with suicidal thoughts to support and help.



Key risk factors

(as adapted from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 2016)

- ▶ **Recent loss.**
- ▶ **Hopelessness.**
- ▶ **Substance misuse.**
- ▶ **Person who is struggling with mental illness.**
- ▶ **Person with other serious health challenges.**
- ▶ **Lack of social support.**
- ▶ **Previous suicide attempt.**
- ▶ **Family member who ended their life through suicide.**
- ▶ **Perfectionism.**



Warning signs

(as adapted from the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention [CASP], 2016)

- ▶ Loss of interest in things a person used to enjoy.
- ▶ Giving things away.
- ▶ Talking about feeling hopeless or worthless.
- ▶ Isolating oneself.
- ▶ Decline in work or school performance.
- ▶ Decline in personal hygiene.
- ▶ Statements like, *“What is the point of going on?”*
“The world is better off without me.”
“I just can’t take the pressure anymore.”
“I wish I were dead.”



We can all learn to feel more comfortable about talking about suicide

People who are thinking about suicide actually feel relieved if you ask them about it.

“I was feeling really down and I knew people at work were noticing. I felt relieved when a colleague came right out and asked me if I was suicidal. It helped me not to feel ashamed for having those thoughts.”

▶ Asking about suicidal thoughts WILL NOT make someone act on them.

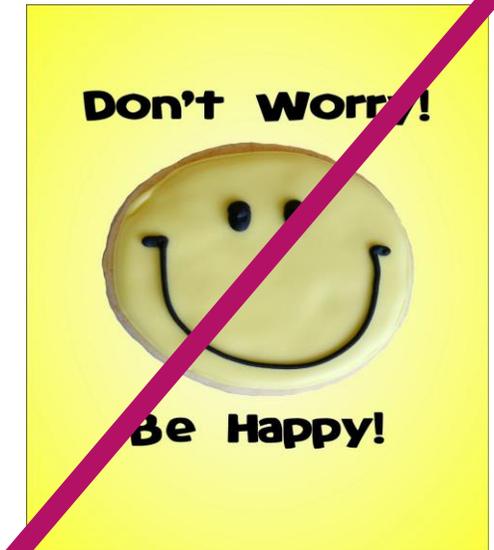
Practice asking the question, “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”



WHAT IS NOT HELPFUL

(as adapted from Stephany, 2007)

- ▶ Do not minimize what the person is experiencing.
- ▶ Avoid statements like:
 - “It will all be okay tomorrow.”*
 - “We all have bad days.”*
 - “Snap out of it.”*
 - “You are scaring me.”*
 - “Let’s do something fun to get your mind off of things.”*



*****AVOID JUDGING THEM AT ALL COSTS—JUDGING CAN CAUSE THEM TO FEEL INCREASED DESPAIR**

WHAT IS HELPFUL (as adapted from Stephany, 2007)

- ▶ Identify with what they are feeling.
- ▶ Use statements like:
 - “You sound upset, I’m here for you.”*
 - “It must be scary to be feeling what you are feeling.”*
 - “I don’t know how to help but I do know how to get you connected to the help that you need.”*
 - “I care about you and I want to connect you to support.”*

*“Sometimes in life,
all we need is a little
acknowledgment.
Someone saying,
'it's okay to feel
that way”*

www.emmymom2.com

POLL #3

Let them know they are not alone

- ▶ Send them the message: *“I care about you.”*
- ▶ *Bridge story:*



The importance of kindness and care

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” - Leo Buscaglia, Psychologist & author

CHOOSE TO BE KIND AND NOT TO BE CRUEL



Advice from a patient

- ▶ I asked one of my patients who had been suicidal for advice on how to be more understanding and empathetic. Here's what she said:

“Make my time with you all about me and listen to my story. Don't judge me or try to fix anything. Be quiet and just listen to me so that I will feel that I actually matter.”

Listening communicates that you care

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another person has to say.”

- Bryant McGill, author & Human Thought Leader



Know what your role is

(as adapted from CASP, 2016)

- ▶ It is not your role to save the other person.
- ▶ But you can stay with them to ensure they are safe.
- ▶ You can connect them to support through a phone number or offer to take them to see a doctor or to the ER.
- ▶ Have these numbers on you, ready to share, either on a card or on your phone:

BC Suicide Helpline: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-794-2433)

Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789 (no area code required)



Ways that an employer, employee, organization or school campus can help

(as adapted from Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, 2016)

- ▶ **For Employers, employees, organizations, and school campuses:**
 - * Be aware of risk factors, warning signs, and ask the question: “*Are you suicidal?*”
 - * Connect the person with suicidal thoughts to support and help.
- ▶ **Additional measures for employers and organizations to consider:**
 - * Consider providing access to confidential counselling services.
 - * For post-secondary campuses, student services usually offers free counselling.
 - * Create a workplace culture where people feel that it is okay to reach out for help and that they will know that they will not be penalized for doing so.
 - * Display posters in open areas and in bathrooms that indicate that it is okay to reach out for help and who to call.

Ideas for posters and organizations

NATIONAL
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
LIFELINE:
I-800-273-TALK
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Call!
Local Crisis Center!

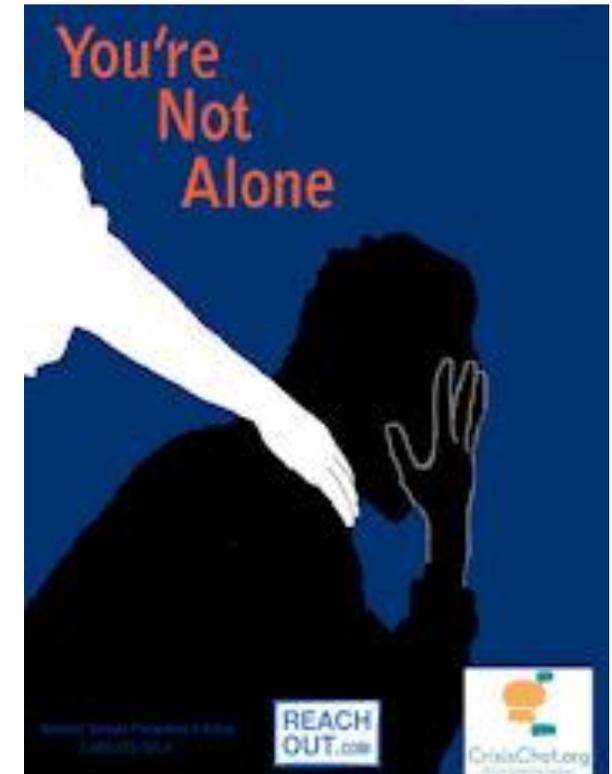


{SUICIDE}
IS 100% PREVENTABLE



SPEAK UP
REACH OUT

You're Not Alone



REACH OUT.com
CrisisChat.org

Consider providing training opportunities on how BEST to help



BC Suicide Prevention Initiative

Training founded on breaking silence – asking/talking about suicide to raise awareness, support help-seeking, provide a compassionate, non-judgmental and informed response



- Half-day Suicide Alertness Training
- Developed in 2006, used in over 20 countries
- Brief training to identify and avert suicide risk
- Basics of recognizing/taking action to connect with resources



- 2-day Suicide Intervention Training
- Developed in '83, over 1M people in 30+ countries trained
- Proven intervention model
- Experiential - skills practice and development



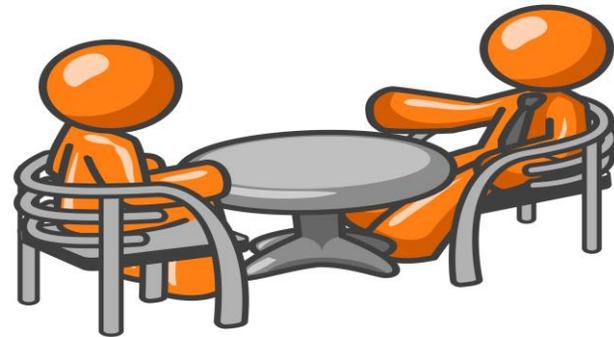
The importance of self-care

(as adapted from Stephany, 2014)

- ▶ We all need to do our very best to make self-care a priority, especially when we are confronted with other people's suffering.
- ▶ Consider doing at least one of the following:
 - * Connect with the goodness of life each and every day.
 - * Consider adopting a habit of gratitude.
 - * Read something positive everyday.
 - * Take better care of your body.
 - * Exercise and eat better.
 - * Stay connected with other people who love and support you.
 - * Cultivate humour.
 - * Reach out for help yourself.

How to help someone who is suicidal (brief but concise role play)

<http://bit.ly/preventsuicidetoday>



References

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take off.
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shouldn't hold
him back.

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AskAboutSuicide.ca



For many who feel suicidal,
a conversation can mean everything

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Any Questions?



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