

Mental Health Guidelines: Sharing your story

Most of us have heard the statistic – 1 in 5 individuals will experience a mental illness diagnosis in their lifetime. For those who don't fall into that 20%, we all still experience stresses, obstacles, and challenges to maintaining our mental health. Maintaining mental health can mean handling our daily stresses positively, coping with larger challenges we experience in life, and acknowledging that sometimes we need help to do these things. By raising awareness of the fact that mental health affects us all, either personally or indirectly as we support a friend or family member, we reduce stigma and support the idea that it is okay to not be okay, and it is okay to reach out for help.

When choosing to talk about mental health we encourage you to look at these language and messaging guidelines and choose appropriate wording that adhere to the guidelines meant to promote mental health while preventing possible harm.

Key Message Guidelines:

- Key messages include the idea that we all struggle at times and it's okay to talk about it and to reach out – we want to promote hope and help-seeking.
- Think about how you can present your story/set to [inspire hope](#) – think about how to [emphasize the healing](#) instead of the pain, and [end with a positive message of hope](#).
- **Consider all who will be exposed to your message** and the potentially negative unintended impacts – there may be people in the crowd who have attempted suicide, lost a loved one to suicide, or have a mental illness diagnosis. How might your message impact them?

Suicide & Language:

Without maintenance of positive mental health, there can be severe and tragic outcomes. By promoting positive mental health we can help reduce the number of people who contemplate, attempt, or die by suicide. When talking about suicide, we work to de-stigmatize suicide and prevent contagion by:

- **Avoiding the phrase 'commit suicide'** which is an outdated phrase implying illegality or moral failing, and instead say 'died by suicide' which is judgement-neutral
- **Avoiding phrases such as 'unsuccessful attempt', 'failed attempt', or 'incomplete attempt'** to describe a suicide attempt where the individual didn't die. That implies there's something left to finish or that they've failed by surviving
- [Avoiding details about suicide methods](#) (i.e not mentioning how they died by suicide or what they used in their suicide attempt) which can trigger individuals or lead to contagion
- Avoiding glorifying suicide as romantic/honourable, simplifying suicide to an identifiable cause, or interpreting suicide as a viable option.
- [Acknowledging that suicide is complex and multi-faceted, and suicide can be prevented.](#)