



RESPONSIBLE CONVERSATIONS:

How to Talk About Mental
Health and Suicide Prevention





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The way we talk about mental health and suicide prevention matters and can influence behavior both negatively and positively.

In this booklet, you'll find mental health facts and guidelines on how to responsibly discuss suicide prevention and mental health challenges from Vibrant Emotional Health – the power behind 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and innovation in mental health for 55+ years.



Let's create safe spaces and lasting impact together!



MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION:

- 1 in 5 Americans have a diagnosable mental health and/or substance use disorder in any given year.
- Only 40% of Americans with a diagnosable mental health and/or substance use disorder seek treatment.
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.
- Mental health treatment works. There are effective, evidence-based and state-of-the-art interventions that can improve the quality of life for individuals coping with mental health challenges.
- The majority of violent crimes and homicides are committed by people who do not have mental health concerns.

Everyone can take action to help someone in their life that may be struggling with mental health or suicidality. Share the #BeThe1To steps when possible.

- Ask
- Be There
- Help Keep Them Safe
- Help Them Connect
- Follow-Up
- Always share resources such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline when discussing suicide and mental health.



ABOUT THE 988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE:

- The 988 Lifeline's network of more than 200 crisis centers, as of July 2024, has answered 10 million calls, texts, and chats from individuals seeking help with suicide, mental health, and substance use-related crises since its launch in July 2022.
- Of these, 1.7 million were texts, marking a 51% increase in text responses over the past 12 months compared to the previous year.
- Nearly 1.2 million of the 988 calls were answered by the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) through 988's Press 1 option. Considering all VCL services, veterans and their supporters have reached the VCL through phone, online chat, and text more than 2 million times since July 2022.
- In 2023, the 988 Lifeline added Spanish text and chat, specialized services for LGBTQI+ youth and young adults, and videophone support for American Sign Language (ASL) users.



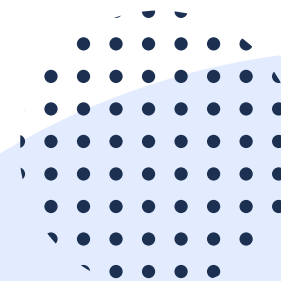
ABOUT THE 988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE:

- Spanish-speaking people can connect directly to Spanish-speaking crisis counselors by calling 988 and pressing option 2, texting “Ayuda” to 988, or chatting online at 988lifeline.org/es.
- LGBTQI+ youth and young adults can connect with a counselor specifically trained to meet their needs by texting “Pride” to 988, calling 988 and selecting option 3, or accessing the service via chat on 988lifeline.org.
- Since these service expansions, 988 counselors have answered approximately 30,000 Spanish-language chats and texts, more than 475,000 texts, calls, and chats from LGBTQI+ youth and young adults, and about 20,000 videophone contacts in ASL.



TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:

- Use person-first language: Put the person before their diagnosis or condition. For example, instead of saying “a schizophrenic” or “an addict,” say “a person with schizophrenia” or “a person with substance use disorder.” This way, you acknowledge that they are more than their diagnosis and that they have dignity and agency.
- Use recovery-oriented language: Use words that convey hope and optimism for people’s ability to recover and live fulfilling lives. For example, instead of saying “suffering from” or “afflicted with,” say “living with” or “experiencing.” This way, you avoid implying that they are helpless victims or that their condition is permanent.



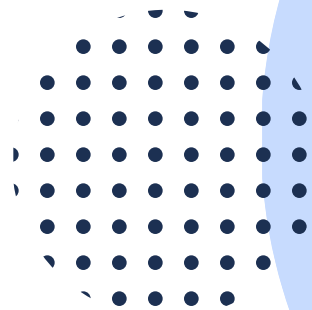
TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:



- Use respectful and accurate terms: Avoid words that are outdated, offensive, or inaccurate when referring to mental health issues. For example, instead of saying “crazy,” “insane,” “psycho,” or “mental,” say “mental health issue,” “mental illness,” or “psychiatric disorder.” This way, you avoid using labels that are hurtful and dehumanizing.
- Suicide is a public health issue, not a crime. Avoid phrases such as “committed suicide,” referring to suicide as “successful/ unsuccessful” or a “failed attempt.” Instead, use phrases such as “died by suicide,” “completed suicide.”
- Avoid speculating about someone’s mental health or identifying a single event or cause of suicide. Suicide and mental health are complex. Do not share quotes from suicide notes.

TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:

- Do not describe in detail the method used.
- Do not include photos of grieving family, friends, memorials, or funerals.
- Avoid sensationalizing language, such as “epidemic,” “skyrocketing,” or other strong terms.
- Refer to people who have attempted suicide as “suicide attempt survivors.” People who have lost loved ones to suicide are referred to as “suicide loss survivors.”



- Refrain from describing suicide as “inexplicable” or “without warning.” Most people who die by suicide exhibit warning signs.
- Offer hope. Use your story and voice to inform the public about mental health treatment, warning signs, and available resources for those in crisis.

LEARN MORE ABOUT VIBRANT:

Vibrant Emotional Health was founded in 1969 as a grassroots organization in response to the unmet needs of New York City residents. Then known as the Mental Health Association of NYC, and still the largest affiliate of Mental Health America, we quickly became an innovator of mental health advocacy, education, and services.

Our mission is to help all people achieve mental and emotional well-being through groundbreaking solutions that deliver high-quality support, when, where, and how they need it.

Today, we continue our legacy of advocating for comprehensive emotional well-being. We administer nationwide lifelines such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, Disaster Distress Helpline, NFL Life Line, and more. Our 20 national and local programs reach over 3 million people annually.

Across the spectrum of mental health needs, Vibrant provides innovative, people-centered, scalable solutions to millions of Americans. Our work is transforming mental health nationwide and ensuring help is always available.



U.S. BASED RESOURCES:

Here is a list of popular resources in the United States that you can provide to individuals as needed:



988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support via phone or chat for people in distress, resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. Includes information on finding your local crisis center.

Phone: 988

Website: 988lifeline.org

#BeThe1To

Embodying the ethos that everyone that takes action to prevent suicide, #BeThe1To details the five evidence - based steps that any individual can take to help someone that is in suicidal crisis, as well as stories of recovery.

Website: bethelto.com

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Offered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the behavioral health treatment services locator offers confidential and anonymous sources of information for persons seeking treatment facilities in the United States for substance abuse/ addiction and/or mental health problems.

Website: findtreatment.gov

U.S. BASED RESOURCES:

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

Is NOT a child abuse reporting hotline. The hotline offers crisis intervention, information, literature, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls are confidential.

Phone: 1-800-4 A CHILD (1-800-422-4453)

Website: childhelp.org/hotline

Crisis Text Line

Crisis Text Line is a free, 24/7 support texting service for those in crisis.

Website: crisistextline.org



U.S. BASED RESOURCES:

Disaster Distress Helpline

A national hotline providing year-round immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster. DDH staff provides counseling and support before, during, and after disasters and refer people to local disaster-related resources for follow-up care and support.

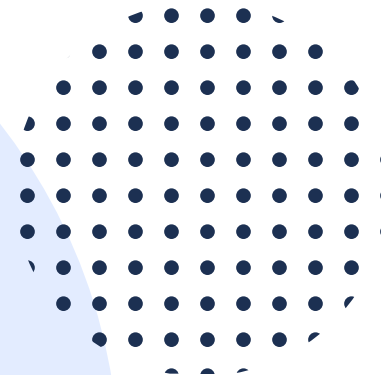
Phone: 1-800-985-5990

Website: samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline

Español: Llama o envía un mensaje de texto 1-800-985-5990 presiona “2.”

For Deaf and Hard of Hearing ASL Callers: Please text or call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 using your preferred Relay provider.

DDH callers can connect with counselors in over 100 languages via 3rd-party interpretation services. Indicate to the responding counselor your preferred language and they will connect you to a live interpreter.



U.S. BASED RESOURCES:

DoD Safe Helpline (operated by RAINN)

A support service specially designed to provide live, one-on-one support to sexual assault survivors and their loved ones within the DoD (Department of Defense) community. Safe Helpline staff members have been trained to answer questions relating to military specific topics such as Restricted and Unrestricted Reporting and how to connect with relevant military resources, such as an installation or base's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), should those services be requested.

Phone: 1-877-995-5247

Info by Text: Text your zip code or installation/base name to 55-247 (in the U.S.) or 1-202-470-5546 (outside the U.S.), and they will text you back with contact information for the nearest civilian or DoD sexual assault service provider. Message and data rates may apply.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

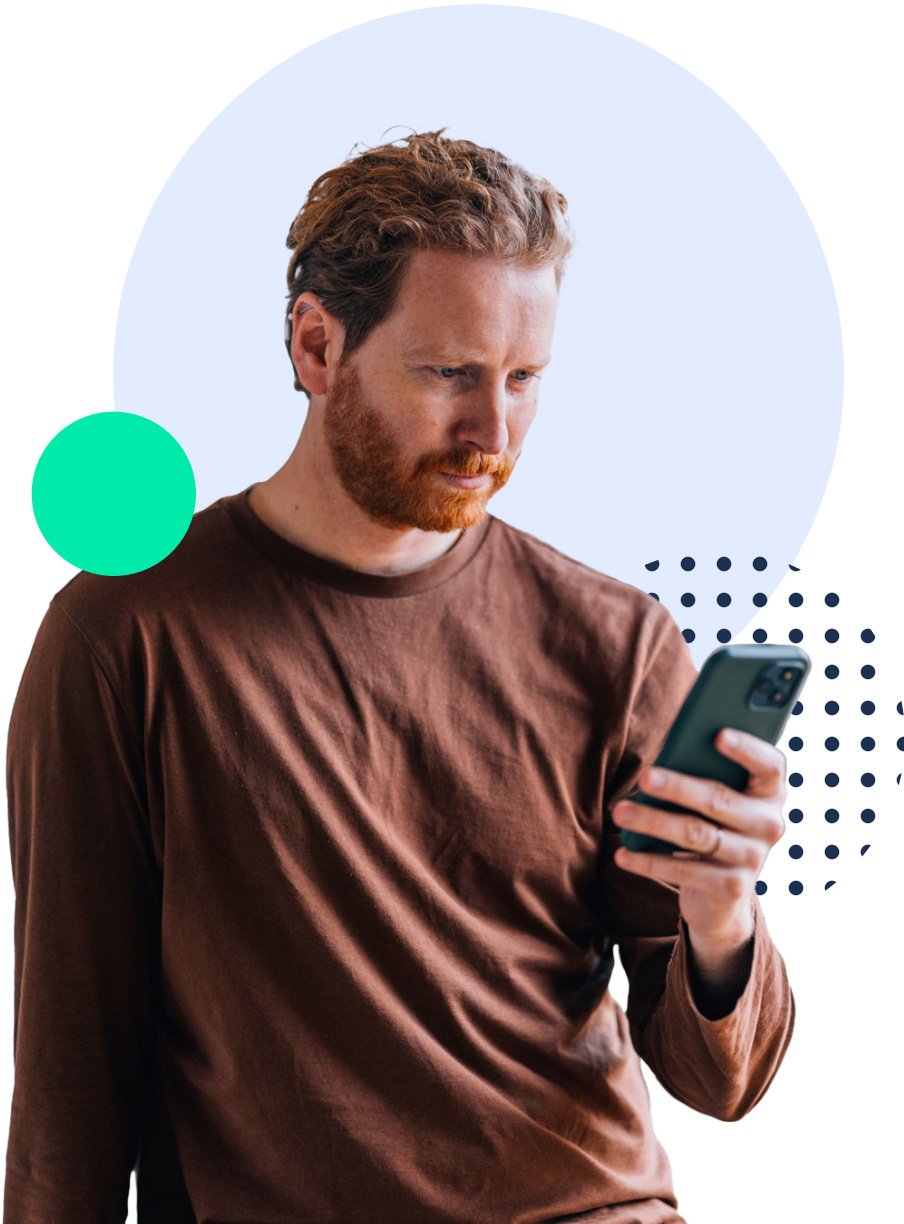
The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides lifesaving tools and immediate support to enable victims to find safety and live lives free of abuse. Callers to The Hotline can expect highly trained, experienced advocates to offer compassionate support, crisis intervention information and referral services.

Phone: 1-800-799-7233

Website: thehotline.org



U.S. BASED RESOURCES:



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI Helpline offers education and information about mental health issues including symptoms of mental health conditions, treatment options, local support groups, and helping family members get treatment . NAMI does not offer counseling.

Phone: 1-800-950-6264

Website: nami.org

National Human Trafficking Resource Center

A national anti-trafficking hotline and resource center serving victims and survivors of human trafficking and the anti-trafficking community in the United States. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. This crime occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud or coercion to control another person for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or soliciting labor or services against their will.

Phone: 1-888-373-7888

Website: traffickingresourcecenter.org

Online tip reporting form (anonymous):

traffickingresourcecenter.org/report-trafficking
(report information about a potential trafficking situation, not for use to report missing children or child pornography).

U.S. BASED RESOURCES:

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Also known as the Treatment Referral Routing Service, this Helpline provides 24-hour free and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and/or substance use disorders, prevention, and recovery. Does not provide counseling, trained information specialists answer calls; they transfer callers to state services or other appropriate intake centers in their states, and connect them with local assistance and support.

Phone: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

Website: samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project, founded in 1998, is a leading national crisis intervention service aimed to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people between ages 13–24. Their hotline is available 24/7 and offers phone, texting, and chat services.

Phone: 1-212-695-8650

Website: thetrevorproject.org



U.S. BASED RESOURCES:

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors offers compassionate care to all those grieving the death of a loved one serving in our Armed Forces.

Online Community Support (chat room, message boards, blogs, survivor stories, online peer groups)–age restrictions and membership requirements may apply for some of these services:

Phone: 1-800-959-TAPS (8277)

Website: taps.org

Trans Lifeline

Hotline staffed by transgender people for transgender people and gender non-conforming people. Trans Lifeline volunteers are ready to respond to whatever support needs members of the community might have. The line is primarily for transgender people experiencing a crisis. This includes people who may be struggling with their gender identity and are not sure that they are transgender. It connects callers with services that can help them meet their needs whenever possible.

Phone: 1-877-565-8860 (United States)

1-877-330-6366 (Canada)

Website: translifeline.org



We envision a world where all people can achieve mental and emotional well-being with dignity and respect.



Instagram, TikTok, X:
@vibrantforall



Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube:
Vibrant Emotional Health

