

# Life, Help, Hope

Tuolumne County Suicide Prevention  
September 25, 2014

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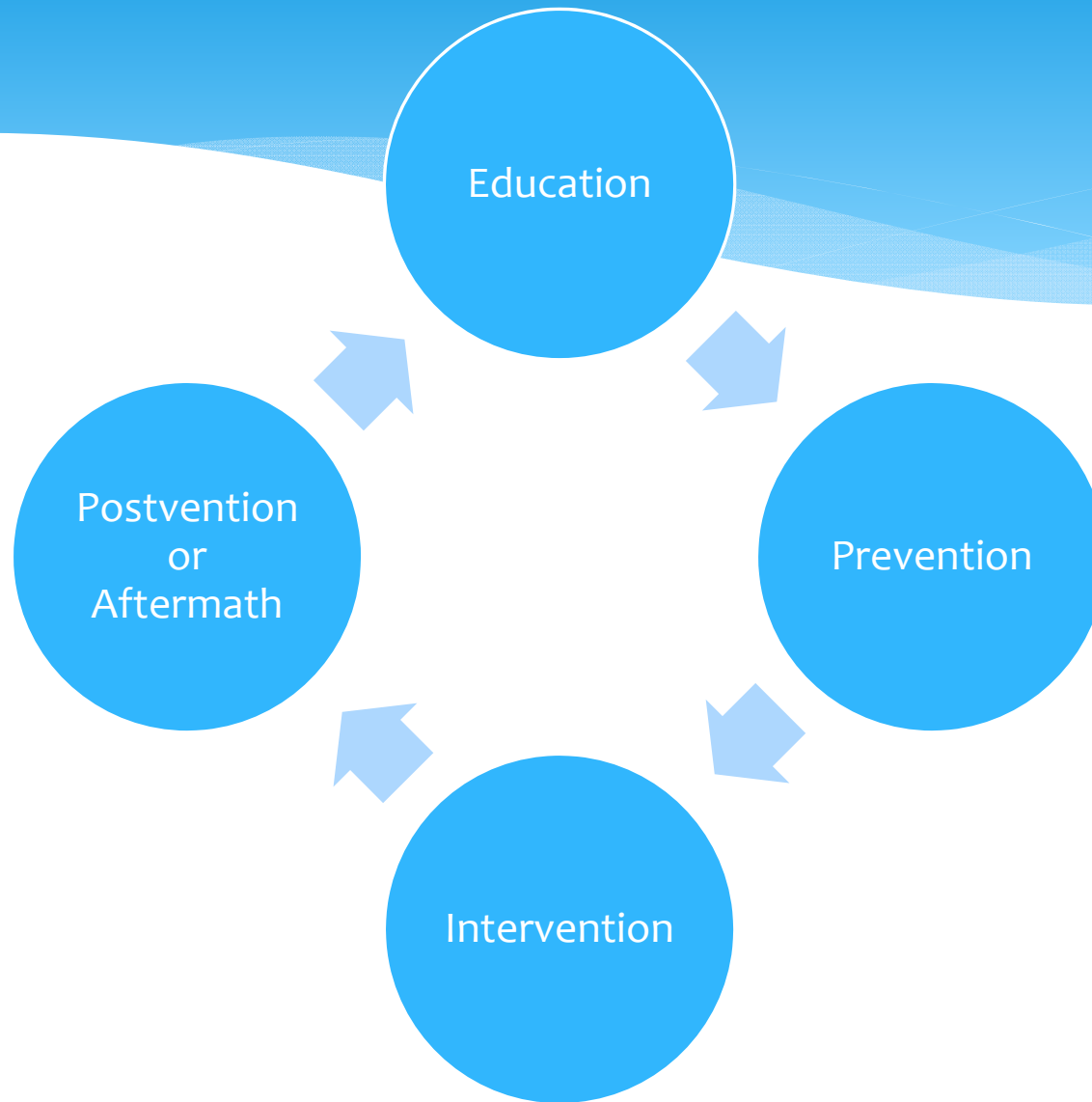
# Why Talk About Suicide?

- 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death overall
- 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death of those ages 15-24 years
- 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death of 25-34 year old adults
- Over 1 million people attempt suicide every year, USA
- More than 15 million people with thoughts of suicide in the US each year (1:20 or 5%)
- Over 1 million people suicide worldwide each year!

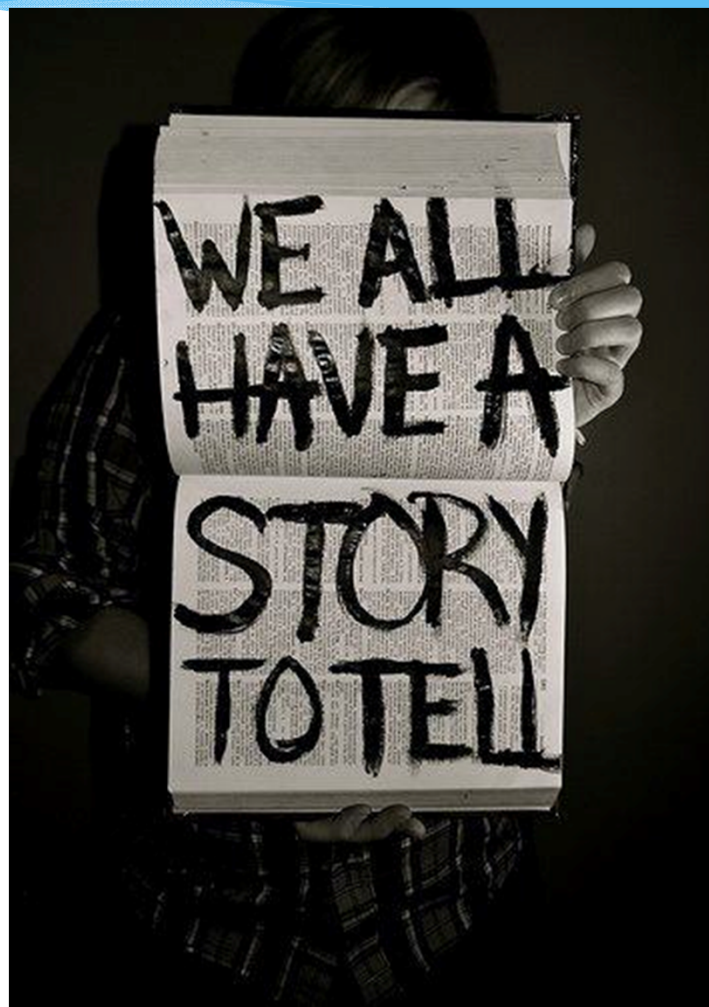
# Why Talk About Suicide?

- It is not just “out there” or “them”
- People are talking about it
- In a typical week, there are more than 19,000 suicide attempts nationally! General population 25:1, youth 100-200:1
- Almost 40,000 completed suicides every year in USA
- These are not just numbers – faces, people

# Where are we in this continuum?



# Why do I talk about suicide?



# What is suicide?

Suicide is the result of an act deliberately initiated and performed by a person in the full knowledge or expectation of its fatal outcome.

(World Health Report, 2007)

# Who is at risk for suicide?

- \* What does a person at risk of suicide look like?
- \* How about someone who has had thoughts of suicide?
- \* What about someone who has attempted in the past?



# Who is at risk?

It is important  
to be mindful  
that anybody can be  
at risk for suicide.







There is no single  
profile or stereotype of  
a person at risk of  
suicide

## Data states:

90% of people who suicide had a diagnosable mental health issue. . .

That said, how many of us, of those we love and care for have a diagnosable mental health issue?

Most people with a diagnosable mental health issue do not die by suicide.

# Depressed vs. depression

“Depressed is when you go to the cookie jar and there are no more cookies.



Depression is no matter how many cookies you put into the jar, it doesn't get any better.”

Amador County student

# What we know is...

- Most people do not want to die, they want to make the pain go away, and they don't know another way
- They want to live, but they don't know how to live with the pain
- They are willing to end their life to end their pain



# Risk Factors

Risk factors indicate someone is at heightened risk for suicide, but indicate little or nothing about immediate risk

Warning signs indicate an immediate risk of suicide

Consider heart disease:

- \* risk factors – obesity, smoking
- \* warning signs – chest pain, shortness of breath

# Invitations to Help



*Help!*

- \* Stressful Events with Feelings of Loss
- \* Thoughts/Comments
- \* Actions
- \* Feelings
- \* Physical

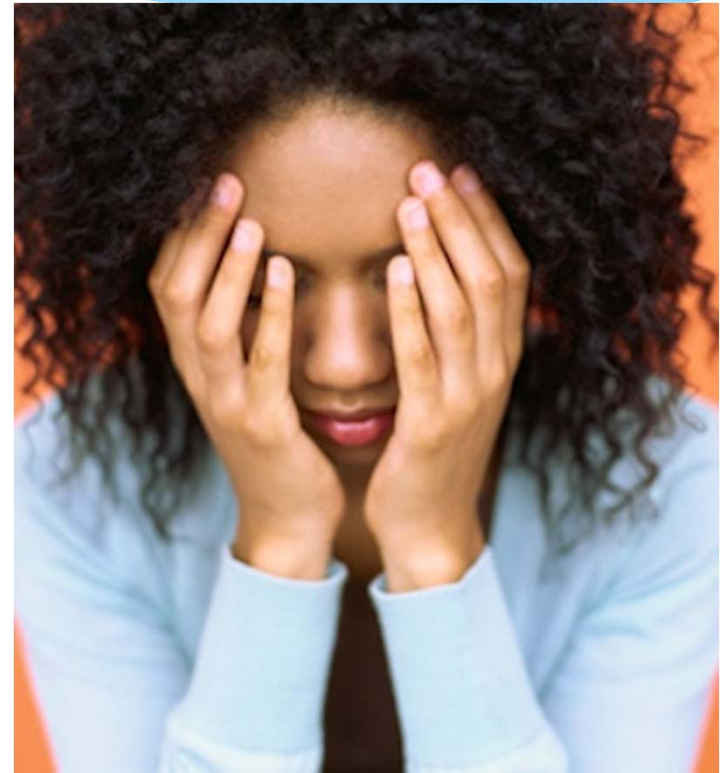
# What to look for:

- \* Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves.
- \* Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online or buying a gun
- \* Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- \* Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- \* Talking about being a burden to others.



# What to Look for:

- \* Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- \* Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- \* Sleeping too little or too much.
- \* Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- \* Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- \* Displaying extreme mood swings.





You might be wondering



# How do we know...

- \* If they are serious?
- \* How they are going to suicide, or their plan?
- \* When they are planning on ending their life?
- \* How much pain are they in?
- \* What is worth living for, from their perspective?
- \* Have they ever attempted suicide before?
- \* Any mental health issues?

# Risk Alerts

- \* Prepared
- \* Desperate
- \* Alone
- \* Familiar
- \* Vulnerable

# Self Injury/Cutting:

- \* Relief from Feelings
  - \* Communication
  - \* A Method of Coping
  - \* Self-Nurturing
  - \* Stopping, Inducing or Preventing Dissociation
- 
- \* Self-Punishment
  - \* Euphoric Feelings
  - \* Re-enacting Previous Abuse
  - \* Physically Expressing Pain
  - \* Establishing Control

Source: Dr. Alderman, The Scarred Soul: Understanding & Ending Self-Inflicted Violence





**AMBIVALENCE**  
**CONFLICTED**  
**UNCERTAIN**

What to do?

**Let's consider for a  
minute. . .**

# Think, honestly who -

- \* - would you tell if you were thinking about suicide?
- \* Would you tell your spouse, your kids, your friends, your family?
- \* How would you tell them? What would you say?



*Interestingly enough:*

*People who have been having  
thoughts of suicide  
say that they don't want  
to burden you and me. . .*

*So they don't tell us either.*

# What can we do to help?



What to do?

**TALK**

# TALK: I need to Tell

- \* I need to openly **Tell** someone about my thoughts of suicide.
- \* I would like to **Tell** several people.
- \* I am aware that I may be cautious in saying it as openly as I want to.
- \* I will be watching for reactions.

# TALK: I need someone to Ask

- Once I have given you any reason to think that I might be thinking about suicide, please **Ask** me exactly about suicide.
- **Ask** me as directly, clearly and as soon as you can.
- Right now that is exactly what I want to you do.

# TALK: I need someone to Listen

- I hope you are a good **Listener**.
- I hope you will **Listen** to what I need to say, not to what you might like me to say.
- I have not really talked to anyone about suicide.
- I need to clear my thoughts by talking through them.

# TALK: I need help Keeping Safe

- I don't know what to do.
- Can you help me think about what needs to be done?
- Can you help me avoid dangers I may not fully recognize?

# Do you believe these needs can be met?

- I need to **Tell** someone about my thoughts of suicide.
- I need someone to **Ask** me about my thoughts of suicide.
- I need someone to **Listen** to my thoughts and feelings about suicide.
- I need help **Keeping Safe** from suicide.





I need to **Tell** someone about my thoughts of suicide.

I am alert to your needing to **Tell** me.

I need someone to **Ask** me about my thoughts of suicide.

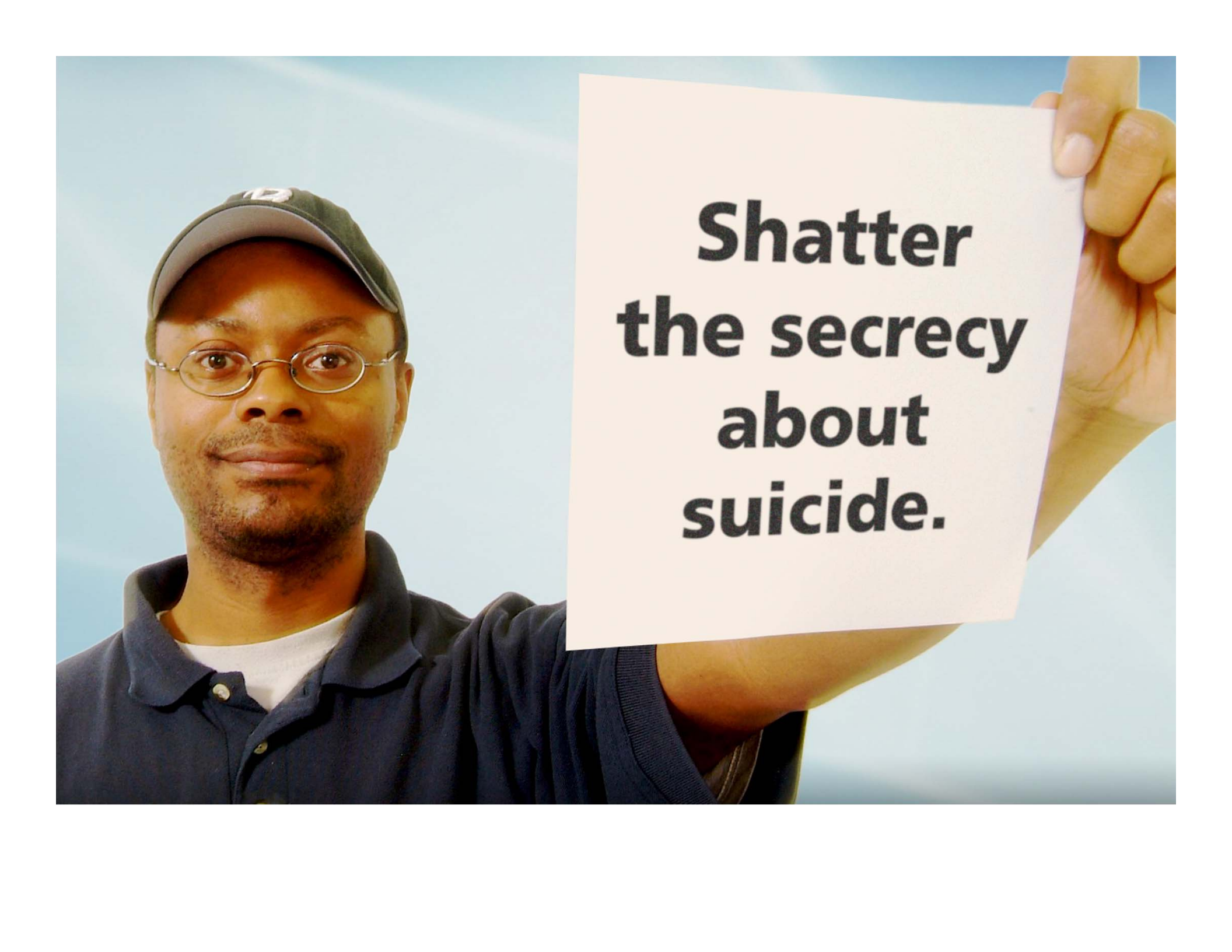
I am willing and able to **Ask** you directly.

I need someone to **Listen** to my thoughts and feelings about suicide.

I am willing and able to **Listen** to your thoughts and feelings about suicide.

I need help **Keeping Safe** from suicide.

I am willing and able to help you **Keep Safe**.

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue polo shirt and a green baseball cap, is holding a white sign. The sign has the text "Shatter the secrecy about suicide." written on it in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background is a light blue sky with some clouds.

**Shatter  
the secrecy  
about  
suicide.**

# Think back to a time...

- \* When you went through a terribly difficult time, what were you feeling?
- \* What were things that people said or did that did NOT help?
- \* What were things that people said or did that DID help?

# Another way to talk about suicide:

- \* Build rapport with the person
- \* Connect what you have heard, & noticed with possible thoughts of suicide
- \* Ask – clearly and directly
  - \* Are you having thoughts of suicide?



# What do we say?

- \* Be prepared for the answer
  - \* If yes, then let's talk about suicide – let them tell their story about suicide – this is IMPORTANT
  - \* If no, and you don't believe them
  - \* If no and you do believe them

# What we ask of you is to:

- \* Care, be present & non-judgmental
- \* Be alert to those with thoughts of suicide
- \* Don't want to miss, dismiss or avoid talking about suicide
- \* You can intervene and/or connect them with someone who can provide additional support services when necessary
- \* **This is not therapy – but suicide first-aid**

# What if . . .

- \* I say the wrong thing and they die?
- \* I don't know what to say?
- \* I'm not a therapist.

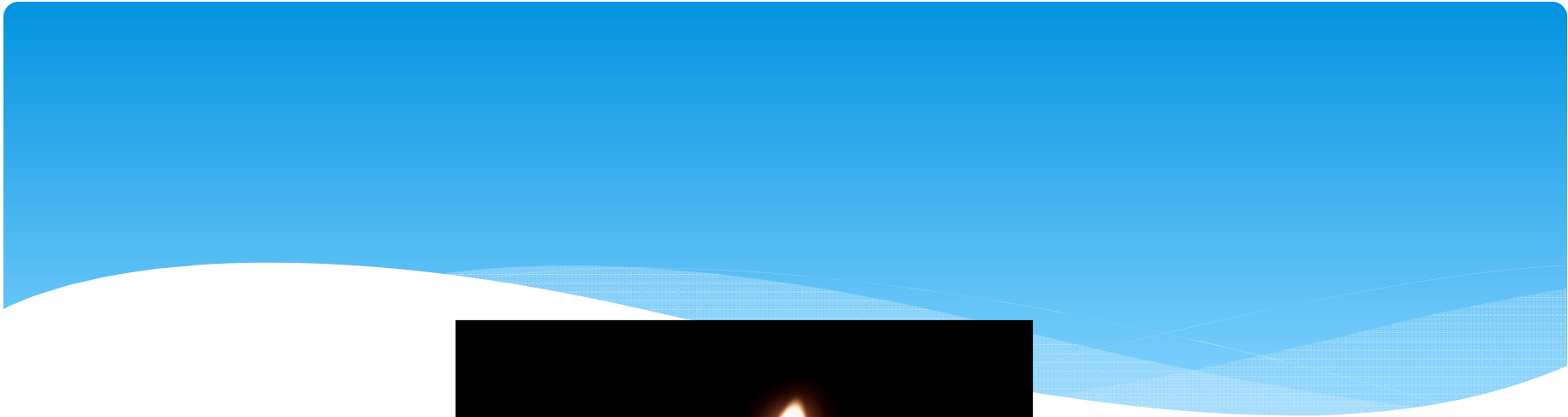
What if, you actually said that:

***I don't really know what to say. I don't want to say the wrong thing. I don't want you to die. I care and though I am not a therapist, I will listen and together we can figure out what to do next.***

# What if

Rather than suicide or life, we could  
choose a third alternative –  
keeping safe for now





# What is worth LIVING for?



You only need one reason to live.

Who or what is your reason?

Be creative. . . Think outside of the box

Internal & external reasons

# Protective Factors



# Major Protective Factors

- \* Effective mental health care
- \* Connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions
- \* Problem-solving skills
- \* Contacts with caregivers



# Reasons to Choose Life

- \* Goals
- \* Graduation
- \* Career
- \* A family of your own
- \* Future
- \* Your faith/beliefs
- \* To prove *them* wrong
- \* Your sports team
- \* Someone who believes in you, too
- \* Family
- \* Friends
- \* Loved ones
- \* Hope
- \* Connections
- \* Pets



# How Do You Cope?

- \* Talk With A Friend
- \* Exercise
- \* Listen To Music
- \* Watch TV
- \* Take A Walk
- \* Eat
- \* Go Shopping
- \* Go For A Drive



# Ways to destress

- \* Comfort yourself
- \* Meditation
- \* Take a mental vacation
- \* Facial, manicure, pedicure
- \* Relax in a sea salt bath
- \* Count your blessings
- \* Sprinkle some lavender
- \* Breathe deeply



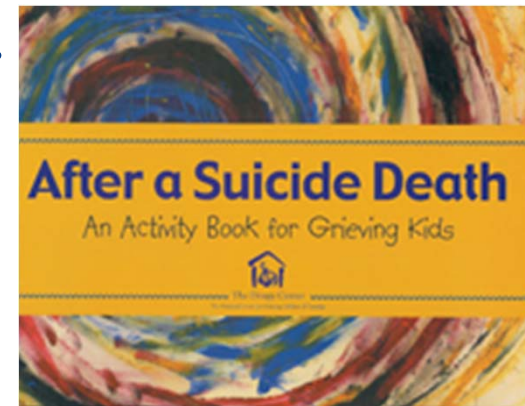
Sometimes . . .

No matter how much you tried,  
regardless of the amount of help  
they received,  
no matter how much  
you loved them,  
some people still choose to suicide.



# With a death by suicide...

- \* We can get stuck on how the person died and forget to remember how they lived
  - \* What was their favorite color?
  - \* What was their favorite ice cream flavor?
  - \* What is a favorite memory you have with them?
  - \* Tell me about who they were to you.
  - \* Get help
  - \* Talk about the person who lived and died



The Dougy Center, <http://www.dougy.org/books-dvds/books/after-a-suicide-death-an-activity-book-for-kids/83/>

# Death by Suicide

- \* Suicided
- \* Died by suicide
- \* Ended their life
- \* **NOT**: Committed, successful or unsuccessful

# It's Complicated

- \* Multifaceted approaches
  - \* Social
  - \* Personal
  - \* Institutional

# Training – Best Practices

- \* ASIST- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- \* safeTALK
- \* suicideTALK and esuicideTALK
- \* Mental Health First Aid
- \* QPR
- \* Grief Support

# Means Restrictions

- \* Firearms are the most lethal and most common method of suicide in the USA
- \* Nine out of ten people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide later
- \* Reducing access to lethal means saves lives

Means Matters – Harvard Study



# Liability

- \* Policies & Procedures
- \* Practices
- \* Document, document, document
- \* Consultation – consult, confer, consult

# Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800.273.TALK (8255)

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

LivingWorks Education

<http://www.livingworks.net/>

Know the Signs

<http://www.suicideispreventable.org/>

# Resources

Means Matters

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/>

American Association of Suicidology

<http://www.suicidology.org/resources/media-professional>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<http://www.afsp.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

<http://www.sprc.org/>





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