

By Reagan Yost

Suicide Prevention and Education

In Oklahoma alone, there are approximately 23 people out of every 100,000 that have died from suicide, almost doubling the nation's average of approximately 14 people out of every 100,000 (Suicide Rates). Knowledge about suicide is briefly taught due to the taboo nature of suicide. Suicide prevention knowledge needs to be more widespread to be effective. With Oklahoma being ranked number 8 in the nation for suicide rates, ways to prevent suicide need to be taught, applied, and recognized to save lives.

Suicide is a heavy topic. Not only will suicide take a toll on those close to the victim, but the surrounding community as well. Some tactics and phrases that are used to prevent suicide are not as effective as some may believe. As an example, saying somebody committed suicide has a negative connotation surrounding it, making the victim's intent sound criminal. While the person using the phrase may not intend to make the victim's tragic act sound criminal, someone directly affected by it may take the negativity from it. "Died by suicide" is a more effective and more neutral phrase that is factful and less hurtful. More phrases that have little to no negative connotation are "death by suicide", "suicide attempt", and "non-fatal suicide attempt" (Payne). Many communities refer to suicide as a taboo topic, to them, it is devastating when it happens, but it is unnecessary to talk about. When talking to a person contemplating suicide, there are many things to consider saying that may harm them more. Phrases such as "I know how you feel" and "Others have it worse than you do" can be more harmful rather than helpful, even if the intent of the supporter is helpful, it will not be taken that way (Five Do's and Don'ts). Rather than using phrases such as the ones above, pointing them to resources such as the National Suicide Hotline, using emotional tactics such as "I would miss you so much" is more effective due to the emotion involved. All suicides can be prevented. Being educated on the topic and ways to prevent it can save someone's life. All communities need to have a learning and educational program to teach others how to address and prevent suicide effectively.

There are many foundations to prevent suicide available, and many locally, nationwide, and even worldwide. The Trevor Project is a Non-profit organization that's goal is to prevent suicides in LGBTQ youth. LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. (Trevor Project). The Trevor Project focuses on ending suicides, providing crisis services, peer support, research to better their prevention methods, educating the public, and advocacy for the young members of the LGBTQ community. The foundations dedicating themselves to saving lives are more dedicated and educated than ever. The widespread use of suicide prevention foundations is saving lives throughout schools that may not have the resources there to help prevent suicide. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) reports that starting in 2019, suicide rates lowered and continued to drop even into the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The Brandon Magalassi Foundation is a local organization that's vision is to "Stop Suicide Dead in its Tracks" by promoting the message of "I Matter, You Matter, We Matter" for numerous years. Having a solid foundation to prevent suicide in the community is a great resource to educate and promote suicide prevention. The message of "I Matter, You Matter, We Matter" is a phrase that positively shows others involved in the school and community they do in fact matter. Organizations

participating in the “We Matter” Movement show the care and devotion each member must put a stop to suicide. Local and Nationwide organizations prevent suicide daily throughout schools by advocating for their members, educating the student body, and being involved.

Within schools, suicide prevention tactics should be addressed more than what is happening today. Most schools have a week in September dedicated to suicide prevention and awareness where they’ll provide resources and fun activities to prevent suicide awareness. Schools should dedicate more than just one “fun” week to a topic that is constant. September is suicide prevention month. Rather than just one month or week, suicide prevention should be taught consistently throughout the whole school year. There are many ways to promote suicide prevention in and out of the classroom. Ways for students to educate their peers on suicide prevention is to teach the warning sign of suicide and reach out to an adult, discourage friends and peers from using the phrase “I’m going to kill myself,” and knowledge resources that can help rather than taking on the pressure themselves. There are many teens in the world that have talked a friend out of suicide. By providing resources in school, suicides can be prevented. Even if students are not comfortable reaching out in school, if they reach out to a friend that has been educated in school, prevention has happened through education at school. Suicide prevention can be addressed and taught in schools to save lives.

The effects of suicide are non-reversible, and without the help and awareness from those throughout the nation, local communities, and each individual, there is no way to prevent suicide. Educating others, and providing resources are a great start to preventing suicide.

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