Quick reference guide: responsible reporting on suicide

Widely disseminated stories of death by suicide are often followed by more suicides in the population, while stories of overcoming a suicidal crisis can lead to fewer suicides. Media professionals are encouraged to focus on presenting stories of people who overcome difficulties following a suicidal crisis while also following the Dos and Don’ts in this resource when reporting on suicide.

Photo credit: Unsplash/Aravind Kumar

Dos

- Do recognize that media professionals may themselves be affected when covering stories about suicide.
- Do apply caution when interviewing bereaved family members or friends or persons with lived experience of suicide.
- Do report stories of how to cope with life stressors and/or suicidal thoughts and the importance of help-seeking.
- Do provide accurate information about where and how to seek help for suicidal thoughts and suicidal crises.
- Do educate the public with the facts about suicide and suicide prevention based on accurate information.
- Do apply particular caution when reporting celebrity suicides.

Don’ts

- Don’t name or provide details about the site/location.
- Don’t oversimplify the reason for a suicide or reduce it to a single factor.
- Don’t report the details of suicide notes.
- Don’t use photographs, video footage, audio recordings, or digital or social media links.
- Don’t use language/content which sensationalizes, romanticizes or normalizes suicide, or that presents it as a viable solution to problems.
- Don’t position suicide-related content as the top story and don’t unduly repeat such stories.

Don’t describe the method used.

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