It isn't how often, it's how

Ending the stigma: what to remember

People are talking about mental health and suicide more than ever, and yet the stigma persists. Here's why, and how we end it.

What is the actual stigma?

The belief that someone who struggles with their mental health, or who attempts or dies from suicide, is weak, selfish, bad or broken, and above all that it's a **choice**. Shame isn't the stigma; it's the **result**.

Why do we say suicide isn't a choice?

Because it's the result of dire circumstances, real or perceived: **extreme distress, isolation and a shift in belief.**

Three steps to end the stigma

1. **Identify the actual stigma**
   It's the belief that it's a choice.

2. **Improve our language**
   Talk about suicide the way you would talk about cancer.

3. **Respond rather than react**
   Reacting comes from fear. Responding comes from understanding.

Which words help?

INSTEAD OF	TRY
He committed suicide.	**He died from suicide.**
She killed herself.	**I lost her to suicide.**
A successful / failed attempt.	**She died from suicide. / He survived.**
They're attention seekers.	**They may be communicating a need for support.**
What do you have to be depressed about?	**No one chooses to feel this way.**

Is it okay to joke about suicide?

Phrases like "I'd rather die than..." can be deeply painful for someone who has lost a loved one or is having thoughts of suicide. The goal isn't perfection. It's awareness.

Need help now? If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text **988** (US) or text HOME to 741741. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

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