

# Through the Lens of Culture Category

## Judging Form

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**Dear Judge,**

We encourage you to seek personal support if you become troubled by the content of this category. If you experience an emotional crisis, there are people available to help you by calling or texting **988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (24/7)**.

The entry you are judging is a 60-second film in the **Through the Lens of Culture** category. The film may cover mental health or suicide prevention topics. Suicide and mental health are complex and sensitive subjects which needs to be addressed with compassion and knowledge. This category has special content that must be included and specific content that must be avoided for the safety of and respect for the audience. At any point if you are experiencing technical difficulties with the website, or have questions regarding the category description, please email [shanti@directingchange.org](mailto:shanti@directingchange.org) or call (619) 786-5622.

In advance, we appreciate your time.

**Messaging Scoring Measures**  
**(Total Points Possible: 60)**

**Does the film include a resource?**

*(Mark "Yes" if the film includes a resource such as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, Teen Line, or another resource)*

**Why?** *A key strategy to prevent suicide is to provide information about crisis and support resources.*

**Yes** (5 points)

**No** (0 points)

**How well does the film explore suicide prevention or mental health through the lens of a particular culture?**

There are many different definitions for culture, but here is the one we are going to use for the purposes of providing direction to our filmmakers: **Culture** is the characteristics and perspectives of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, ethnicity, nationality, religion, cuisine, social habits, sexual orientation, gender identity, a shared experience, music, arts and more. And when it comes to mental health and suicide prevention culture can influence how and if we talk about these topics, whether or not we seek help, what kind of help and from whom.

**When reviewing this film, consider if the film does a good job of connecting culture to suicide prevention, mental health, mental illness, or help-seeking.** A film might do a wonderful job in presenting information about or from the perspective of a particular culture, but does it also make a connection to how this influences suicide prevention, mental health, or help-seeking? And vice versa, a film might do a great job at talking about mental health and suicide prevention, but does it talk about these topics through the lens of culture?

**Award up to 25 points**  
( \_\_\_\_\_ points)

<p><b>Does the film do a good job of <u>not</u> oversimplifying the causes for suicide/mental health challenges OR how to get better?</b></p> <p>When judging this specific criterion, please consider that the film should not oversimplify the causes for suicide, the causes for mental health challenges/illnesses, or oversimplify how to get better from a mental health challenge or suicidal thoughts.</p> <p>It is okay to talk about life problems in general, or those associated with a particular culture, that may increase a person’s risk of suicide such as increased stigma or lack of support, and to talk about cultural issues as a possible contributing factor to why a young person might be feeling hopeless, or showing other warning signs for suicide, <u>but the film should not point to a person’s culture, sexual orientation, gender, or other factors as the cause of suicide.</u> The truth is that not one thing “causes” suicide, usually a person is dealing with multiple tough situations and is showing warning signs.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes (10 points)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>No (0 points)</b></p>
<p><b>Does the film communicate a message that inspires the viewer to take action?</b></p> <p>Think of it this way: after someone watches this film, what are they asked to do? Will the film inspire someone to feel, act, or think differently? Here are a few examples, but these are not meant to be exclusive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Explore how the way that we think and talk about mental health or suicide can be influenced by generational differences.</b> The call to action could be to ask parents/caregivers to be more supportive if a young person in their life is struggling with their mental health.</li> <li>• <b>Demonstrate the importance of belonging, support, and strength that can come from being part of a cultural groups and supportive relationships.</b> The call to action could be to engage in cultural connection or reflect on how these connections can improve one’s mental health.</li> <li>• <b>Show examples of cultural healing practices that can help someone cope with mental health challenges or emotional pain.</b> The call to action could be to learn about coping strategies and finding the one that works for them.</li> <li>• <b>Encourage people to seek help and show how this might look different depending on our culture and the way we were brought up.</b> The call to action could be to seek help and for others to support this help-seeking.</li> </ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>If Yes, award up to 10 points (____points)</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>No (0 points)</b></p>

<p><b>Does the film include captioning?</b></p> <p>Films are encouraged to be submitted in languages other than English, but all films in this category are required to include captioning, even if the film is in English.</p> <p><b>Mark “yes” if the film meets one of these criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The film is in English and includes captioning in English.</li> <li>• The film is in a language other than English and includes captioning in English.</li> </ul> <p><i>Why? Captioning will allow for a wider dissemination of films including to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> (10 points)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> (0 points)</p>
<p><b>Total Safe Messaging Score</b> (Points Possible 60 – see previous)</p>	

<b>Technical and Creative Scoring Measures</b>	<b>Points Possible</b>	<b>Score</b>
The film <u>creatively</u> explores this topic in a way that is positive, hopeful, and educational. (This is less about content, but about the creativity used to communicate the content.)	Up to 15	
The film is technically well-produced (focus, exposure, clear audio, good use of graphics and/or special effects, good pacing and flow).	Up to 10	
The film provides a clear and effective narrative (script and quality), it is easy to understand and it makes sense.	Up to 10	
The film creatively used colors, music or graphics to support its main message and set a positive and hopeful tone for the film.	Up to 5	
<p><b>Total Technical and Creative Score</b> (Points Possible: 40)</p>		
<p><b>Total Safe Messaging Score</b> (Points Possible: 60)</p>		
<p><b>Total Overall Score</b> (Out of 100)</p>		

## Disqualifying Content:

Submissions that include this type of content, or deemed to contain inappropriate content, will be disqualified.

1. The film **SHOULD NOT** include portrayals of suicide deaths or attempts (such as a person jumping off a building or bridge, or holding a gun to their head). Portraying suicide attempts and means, even in dramatization, can increase chances of an attempt by someone who might be thinking about suicide and exposed to the film.

*Be creative and cautious:* If you are considering showing items someone might use for a suicide attempt in your film, we encourage you to think about the purpose and benefit of including this in your film. There are other ways to demonstrate that someone is thinking about suicide without showing a weapon. Can you convey the sentiment you are seeking without showing this? In general, it is best to avoid showing images of ways people might attempt suicide, especially weapons.

Also consider that showing images of items/ways people might harm themselves might also be disturbing to those who have lost someone to suicide. Remember, we are focused on prevention and the most important part is educating others about how to help. If you have any questions about this, please [contact us!](#)

2. The film should be sensitive to racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation and gender differences, with all individuals realistically and respectfully depicted.
3. Films cannot use terms like “crazy” and “psycho” in any language without **explicitly** communicating to the audience that these terms are unacceptable. If the film does not verbally communicate that using derogatory terms are unwelcomed, the film will be disqualified. Our recommendation is to avoid labels of any kind in order to keep the message positive. Some labels to avoid are: Mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, maniac, insane, lunatic, looney, crazy, off, wacko, abnormal.

**Why this matters:** It is important that films do not reinforce stereotypes and labels that could keep people from seeking help. Although there are many ways to show disapproval when using derogatory terms (i.e. body language), it is important to verbally communicate that using such terms is hurtful and inappropriate. For more information on stigmatizing words and how to avoid using them, visit <https://mhsoac.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018-11/DRC%20Language%20Report.pdf>

4. Films **cannot** include developmental disabilities (such as Down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, etc.). Though the difference between development disabilities and mental illness is not cut and dry, it is best to avoid making a film about developmental disabilities. Mental health challenges common to young people include: Depression, Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Eating Disorders, self-harm, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as well as issues that may not have a diagnosis, but have challenging symptoms that deserve attention and care.

5. **Films should be careful not to accidentally reinforce stereotypes** of people living with a mental health challenge such as: being dangerous or violent, disabled or homeless, helpless, or being personally to blame for their condition. Although popular culture and the media often associate mental illness with crime or acting violently, people living with mental illness are more likely to be victims of crime. It is important to steer clear of perpetuating myths and stereotypes in order to produce an accurate, respectful and mindful film.

## Suicide Warning Signs for Youth

Warning signs are indications that someone may be in danger of suicide, either immediately or in the near future. Most people show one or more warning signs, so it is important to know the signs and take them seriously especially if a behavior is new or has increased and if it seems related to a painful event, loss, or change. ([www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org](http://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org))

- Talking about or making plans for suicide.
- Expressing hopelessness about the future.
- Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress.
- Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant:
  - Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations
  - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)
  - Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context
  - Recent increased agitation or irritability

The following is a list of emergency warning signs that require immediate action:

- Threatening self-harm or suicide
- Person is in act of self-harm or suicide
- Person has a weapon or other lethal means
- Seeking weapons or means to self-harm
- Talking about death or suicide while acting agitated or anxious, or while under the influence of drugs or alcohol

These warning signs may not signal an emergency situation, but are signs that a person may be in need of help:

- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Hopelessness
- Isolation, loneliness
- Low self-esteem

- Significant personality change
- Dramatic mood changes
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, etc.
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Increasing use of alcohol or other drugs
- Putting his or her affairs in order (for example, giving away favorite possessions, or throwing away important belongings)
- Becoming suddenly cheerful after a period of depression (this could be a sign that a person has made a suicide plan)