



Through the Lens of Culture

1. How well does the film creatively explore suicide prevention or mental health through the lens of a particular culture? (0-30)

There are many different definitions of “culture,” but for the purpose 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, shared experience, music, arts, and more. When it comes to mental health and suicide prevention, culture can influence how (and if) people talk about these topics, whether or not they seek help, as well as what kind of help they seek and from whom.

For this scoring measure, think about how well the film shares a creative and positive message about the importance of breaking down stigma about these topics, talking openly about mental health, or how we can play a vital role in ensuring that all young people, regardless of their culture or group association, get the help they need.

Here are some examples:

- **Explore how reducing mental health stigma and encouraging people to seek help might look different depending on our culture and the way we were brought up.** Films could dispel myths and misconceptions about mental health and suicide prevention that might be prevalent in a particular culture and show that seeking help is not shameful, mental illnesses are common and treatable, and recovery is possible.
- **Explore generational differences.** The way we think about and talk about mental health and suicide can be influenced by generational differences between grandparents and parents, or parents and children. To educate an older generation about the warning signs of suicide, acceptance, or about the importance of supporting young people’s mental health and getting help, films may be in a variety of languages, such as the primary language of the cultural group being discussed. Films can also highlight specific views and terms about suicide or mental health that people from that group may have grown up with.
- **Demonstrate how cultural groups and community can provide support and strength.** Traditions, healing practices, and other support from our culture and community can be protective and positively impact our mental health.
- **Inspire action.** Films can share a message that inspires positive action about mental health or suicide prevention within a cultural group. Films should be action-oriented and encourage change and support (for instance, by urging viewers to learn where to get help, how to offer support to someone, or how to get involved and learn more information).

Note: The above list of examples is not comprehensive, and filmmakers can meet this criterion in many ways. Additionally, please keep in mind that it is okay to talk about how life problems and cultural factors may impact a person’s ability to talk about their problems or seek help or factors that increase a person’s risk for suicide, such as family issues (pressure to succeed, acculturation, gender identity) or social issues (bullying, break-ups). It is also okay to talk about these issues and life problems as possible contributing factors to why a young person might be feeling hopeless,



drinking more, or isolating themselves (which are warning signs for suicide), but films should not point to just one of these events as the cause of suicide or mental illness.

2. How well does the film tell a story that makes a strong connection between culture and how it influences our mental health, suicide prevention, how we heal, or how we cope with tough times? (0-20)

When reviewing films in this category, please consider how well the film connects culture to mental health, mental illness, suicide prevention, or help-seeking. Films should not address only culture OR mental health but need to bridge these topics in a meaningful way.

3. Does the film apply appropriate language and/or safe messaging (where applicable)? (Yes/No, Yes = 20 points)

Please review the safe messaging and language guidelines below when scoring this question. You will answer “no” if one or more of these were not applied.

- **The film avoids oversimplification of the causes of suicide, mental illness, and/or the process of recovery.** It is okay for films to talk about life problems that may increase a person’s risk of suicide – such as family issues (divorce, abuse) or social issues (bullying, break ups) – as these can possibly contribute to a young person feeling hopeless, engaging in reckless or harmful behaviors, or isolating themselves from others (all of which are warning signs for suicide); *however, films should not point to a person’s culture, sexual orientation, gender, or other factors as THE cause of suicide or mental illness.* No one thing definitively causes suicide and mental health challenges, and people experiencing suicidal thoughts are often dealing with multiple difficult situations and exhibit warning signs. Additionally, it often takes more than “a simple act of kindness” to save a life or to heal from the root causes that contribute to thoughts of suicide or mental illness. For instance, although picking up someone’s books when they fall is a nice metaphor for treating others with empathy and compassion, recovery and suicide are both complicated.
- **The film uses appropriate language around suicide and mental health (if applicable):**
 - Use “died by suicide” or “took their own life” (do not use committed suicide).
 - Use “attempted suicide.” Suicide and suicide attempts should not be referred to as “successful” or “unsuccessful,” as the concept of “success” (or its lack) does not apply to suicide.
 - Use person-first language when referring to people who are living with mental health challenges. For example, instead of calling someone “mentally ill,” we could say that they are “experiencing a mental health challenge; or, instead of saying “He is bipolar.” say “He was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.”
 - Films should not use derogatory terms (such as “crazy,” “psycho,” or “insane”) without also communicating that they are not an acceptable way to describe others or talk about mental illness. It is important not to perpetuate the use of stigmatizing labels that could isolate those who are struggling or prevent them from seeking help.



- **The film avoids harmful statistics about suicide:** Films should avoid using statistics that make suicide seem common or inevitable (which could encourage a young person already thinking about suicide to mistakenly believe that it is a normal and acceptable solution to their problems). Saying something such as “a person dies by suicide every 18 minutes” also takes the focus off of the help available to those who are struggling. Remember, films should be focused on raising awareness around suicide prevention, not just convincing people that suicide is a problem.
- **The film avoids stereotypes and shows sensitivity to differences:** Films should be careful not to reinforce stereotypes of people living with mental health challenges – such as them being dangerous, violent, disabled, homeless, helpless, or personally to blame for their condition(s). It is important not to perpetuate myths and stereotypes in order to create accurate and respectful films (for instance, although popular culture and media often associate mental illness with crime or violence, people living with mental illness are actually more likely to be victims). Additionally, all films should be sensitive to racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, and/or gender differences where applicable, with all individuals and cultures realistically and respectfully depicted.

4. How technically well-produced is the film? (Consider focus, exposure, audio clarity, use of graphics and/or special effects, good pacing, flow, etc.) (0-10)

5. How well does the film provide a clear and effective narrative/script that is easy to understand and makes sense? (0-10)

6. How well does the film creatively use colors, music, and/or graphics to support its main message and set a positive and hopeful tone? (0-10)