



Directing Change Lesson Plan: Suicide Prevention

Lesson #1- Recognizing Warning Signs and Offering Help

Objectives: (1) Students will understand warning signs of suicide and how to recognize them
(2) Students will be able to identify a trusted adult they will turn to for support

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials: Access to computer and large screen/projector to project PowerPoint presentation
Access to internet to access educational films

Additional resources:

- “The Signs”: <https://vimeo.com/124831022>
- “All You Need is Words”: <https://vimeo.com/124872750>
- “Hey Taylor”: <https://vimeo.com/92755737>
- “How to Help a Friend” Educational Video: <https://vimeo.com/464403017>
- “Suicide Prevention 101” Educational Video: <https://vimeo.com/464407220>

INTRODUCTION

(1) Explain that today we are learning about recognizing warning signs of suicide and how to appropriately respond to a friend or family member who may need help.

(2) Show students Slides 1 through 4 of the Suicide Prevention Lesson Plan Presentation

Warning Signs

- 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

If you think someone might be at risk for suicide, you need to seek help from a trusted adult immediately, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, or 9-1-1:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.

Tell an adult

- Suicide needs to be taken seriously every time, and adults need to know.
- You may think that you and your friends can get through anything together but when suicide is involved, adults need to know.
- There are good people who can help...a teacher...a counselor...a coach...a parent.
- If an adult is not available, immediately call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255**

Remember, if anyone is harming themselves now or has just harmed themselves, call 911 or take them to an emergency room immediately.

ENGAGE

- 1) Ask students to suggest behaviors they might observe in a friend who may be thinking about suicide. Write their suggestions on the white board.
- 2) Go through slides 5 through 10 and talk about warning signs for suicide and how to offer support to a friend that is thinking about suicide.
- (3) Show Directing Change film “The Signs” about warning signs:

- "The Signs": <https://vimeo.com/124831022>

- Discussion Question: What warning signs were listed in this film?

(4) Show Directing Change film "A New Tomorrow" about warning signs and connecting a friend to help:

- "A New Tomorrow": <https://vimeo.com/92755069>

- Discussion Question: How did the friend connect the person to help?
- Discussion Question: Research shows that 60-80% of young people tell a friend that they are thinking about suicide, but less than 25% of those friends go on to seek help for that person.
 - Why do you think only $\frac{1}{4}$ of those friends tell an adult?
 - Would you keep something a friend told you a secret? Why?

DO/EXPERIENCE

Implement one or both of these two activities (optional).

Activity #1: Spot the Change Game

Activity #2: Tell a Trusted Adult

REFLECT

Ask students to share one thing they learned today about warning signs and supporting a friend that they did not know before the lesson began.

APPLY

Explore how students might act in the following situations, helping them see how they might apply the knowledge from today's lesson:

- What would you do if you recognized warning signs in a friend?
- Who would you tell if a friend told you they were thinking about suicide and asked you to promise not to tell anyone?
- What would you say to the trusted adult?
- Would you tell your friend who confided in you that you had told a trusted adult, even if they asked you to keep it a secret?

(Note to Teacher: Students are apt to answer with responses they think that you may want to hear. Challenge them to consider what they really would or would not do if they were told not to break a friend's trust and tell a secret. Help them to explore why doing the "right" thing might not always be so easy).



ACTIVITY #1: DO/EXPERIENCE Spot the Change Game

Adapted from San Diego Youth Services "Here Now" Student Presentation

1. Request 3 to 4 volunteers and have the rest of the class take a close look at them.
2. Ask the volunteers to leave the classroom and change something about their appearance. Examples would be: pulling out their pockets, remove an earring, taking off glasses, tucking in or untucking shirt.
3. When the volunteers return, ask class to spot the changes.
4. Link spotting the change in friends to warning signs and how we recognize them.
 - a. Discussion Question: How would you notice the difference in yourself or your friends?
 - b. Sometimes the changes are not that visible or we don't feel safe sharing. So often when someone asks us how we are doing, we say "...fine" when we really might be meaning, I am feeling depressed, sad, alone, hurt, confused, unloved, misunderstood, insignificant, broken, hopeless.
 - c. Ask: If you are worried for a friend or yourself, who can you turn to? Can you name three trusted adults that you could go to if you or your friend needed help?

Assignment Ideas:

Read 13 Reasons Why and write book report

Watch one of the movies that deals with SP and write a report- creative writing/English

Have students write a script showing SP warning signs

ACTIVITY #2: DO/EXPERIENCE Identify a Trusted Adult

Adapted from San Diego Youth Services "Here Now" Student Presentation

1. Ask students to write down the names of 2 people they can contact when they have good news to share.
2. Then ask students to write down the names of 2 people they can contact if they have bad news to share.
3. Then ask students to write down the names of 3 trusted adults (at home or at school) they can contact if a friend tells them they are thinking about suicide.
4. Ask: Why did you choose those 3 trusted adults. Ask students if the trusted adults are someone they know at home or at school? If they don't have someone at home, or vice versa, ask them to think of one.
5. Inform students that you are a trusted adult who they can come to if they have a friend who is thinking about suicide or needs help.
6. Inform students that trusted adults can be family members, caregivers, family friends, teachers, counselors, coaches, clergy members, youth leaders, laws enforcement officers.

****Inform students that they can always call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline****