

# Overall Outline of 3 Part Series



- Each session should include larger group instruction with experiential components with smaller group breakout and/or small group discussion.
- Session 1: Look for Signs
  - Grounding in the Problem, the role of the friend, + Forefront's LEARN Model
  - Look for Signs = Cup Activity
  - Small Groups
- Session 2: Empathize, Acknowledge, and Ask!
  - What is Empathy?
  - How to ask about Suicide
  - Small Groups
- Session 3: Next Steps = Trusted Adults
  - School Resources, Community Resources
  - Who are the trusted adults?
  - Small Group: Trusted Adults Activity



# Session 1: Introduction and Look for Signs

- Grounding in the Problem, the role of the friend, + Forefront's LEARN Model

- Intro to Problem, Forefront, + Role of the Friend
- Look for Signs = Cup Activity
- Small Groups

**Objective: Normalizing Mental Health & Looking for Signs in Self/Others (L of LEARN)**

WA State SEL Benchmarks:

- 1a – Demonstrates awareness and understanding of one own's emotions and emotions' influence on behavior.
- 1c – Demonstrates awareness and understanding of external influences, e.g. culture, school, and community resources and supports
- 2a – [builds readiness to] demonstrate the skills to manage one's emotions, thoughts, impulses, and stress in constructive ways
- 4a – Demonstrates awareness of other people's **emotions, perspectives**, cultures, languages, histories, identities, and abilities.

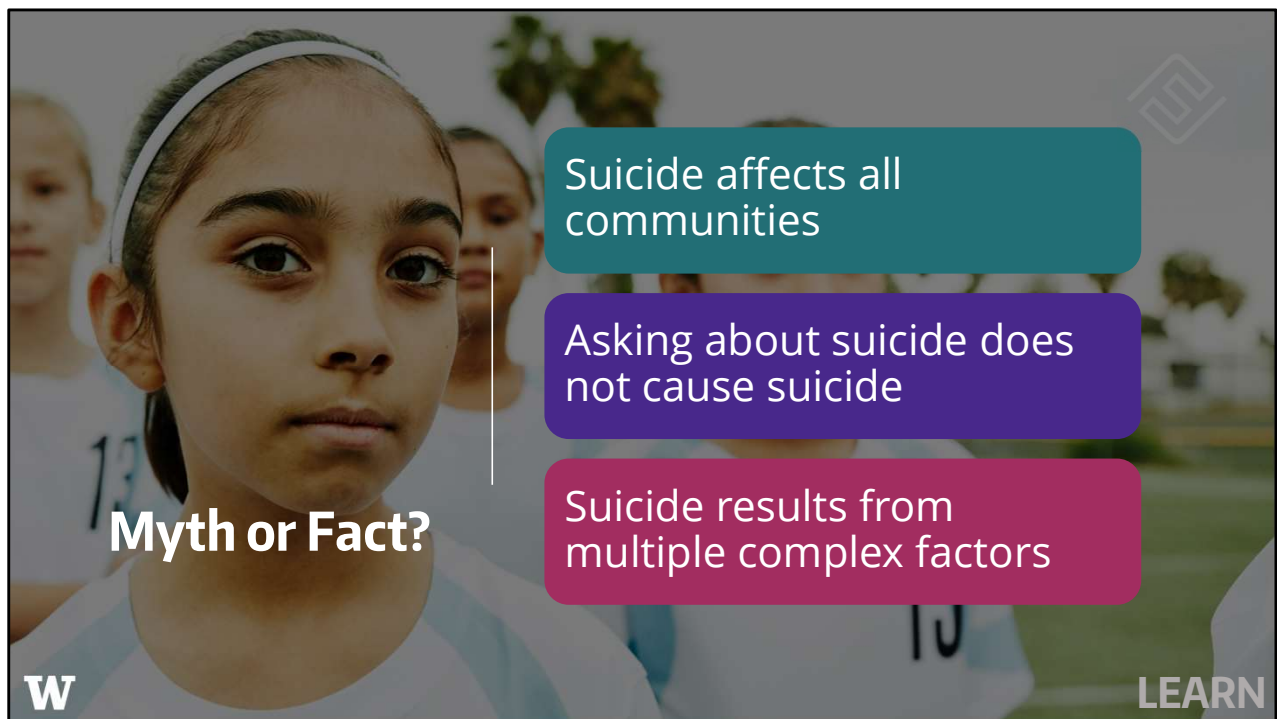




Table top name tags

**Pass out/name tags!!**

- Name (pronouns) + one word you use to describe mental health
- On the hidden/underneath part: what is one reason mental health is not talked about?
- Facing you: what is something you do to stay healthy & well?



Some of you may be wondering, “What does the topic of suicide have to do with me?”

There are lots of myths about suicide and many things we still don’t know.

Which of these statements do you think is true? Check those boxes on Question 1 of your worksheet.

The correct answer is, these are ALL true.

The truth is, a lot of us are or will be affected by this issue. It's really helpful to know that:

- Depression, anxiety, and substance use are all risk factors for youth suicide.
- Mental illness and substance use disorders are treatable, and many suicides are preventable.
- Because these challenges can surface at a young age, prevention plays an important role.
- This issue affects everyone, so our staff and parent community also get this training.

People of any background can be at risk for suicide, no matter our identity.

- Members of marginalized groups are at higher risk due to being treated poorly and/or insensitively.

Asking about suicide does not cause suicide:

- We know that asking about suicide does not cause suicide or put the idea of suicide in someone’s head. In fact, asking can actually lower the amount of distress that someone is experiencing.

Many stories about suicide tend to focus on one cause. However, most suicides involve multiple complex factors. We also know that a death by suicide impacts entire communities.



## Why is this important?

27% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in our state felt so sad or hopeless that they stopped doing their usual activities.

11% of the students in our state do not feel they have a trusted adult to turn to when they are sad or hopeless.

1 in 6 Washington state students has considered suicide in the last year.

Some of you may be wondering, “What does the topic of suicide have to do with me?”

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# What protects us against suicide?

- **Connections to friends, family, culture and community**
- **Coping and problem-solving skills**
- Access to physical and mental health care
- Limited access to lethal methods (e.g., firearms, medications, drugs)

W



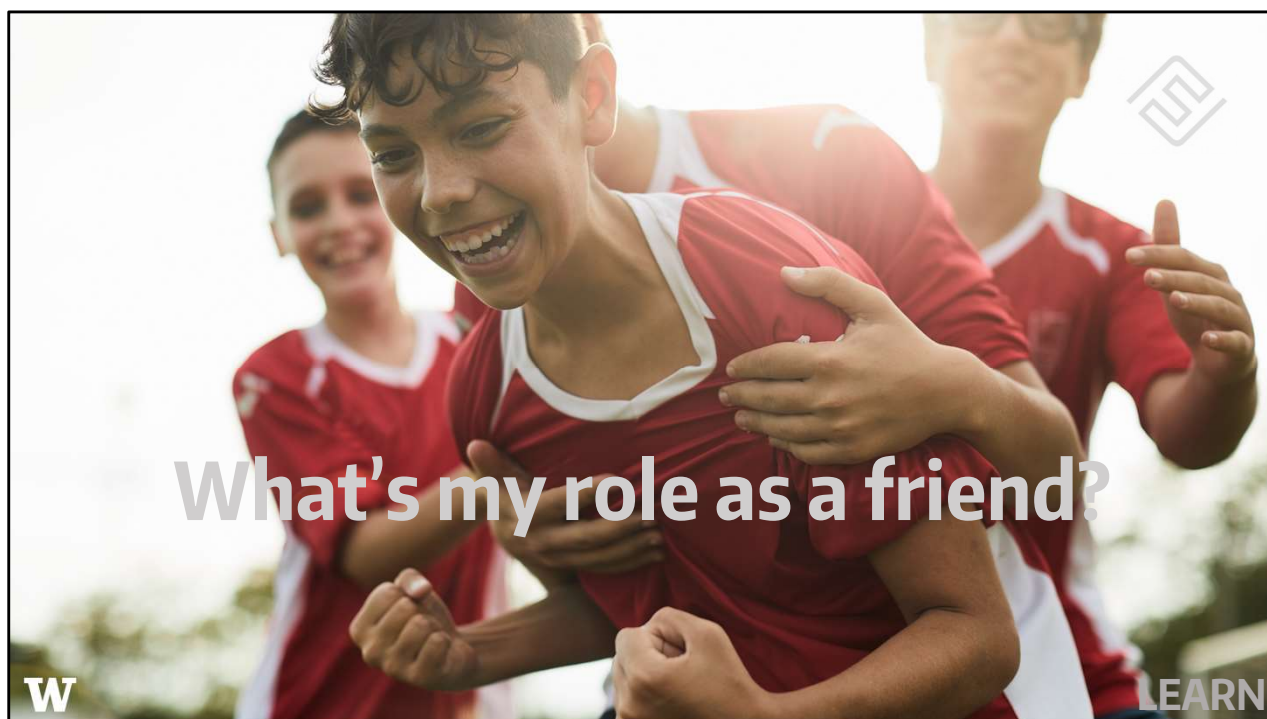
Suicide can be a complex topic. Knowing about risk and protective factors is important!

- Experts are still learning about factors that can act as a buffer against suicide.
- The good news is that we can all learn to build in more protective factors in our lives.

So, what protects us against suicide?

- Connections to friends, family, culture, and community.
- Limited access to lethal methods. (e.g., firearms, medications, drugs)
- Coping and problem-solving skills.
- Access to physical and mental health care





Your role as a friend is to learn how to recognize and respond to someone who may be considering suicide.

- Today you'll learn the signs, how to recognize common warning signs, how to respond, and where to get help.
- This information can and should be used for anyone in crisis.

Raise your hand if you've been trained in CPR.

What is the goal of CPR? Keep your hand raised to answer, or I can call on someone.

Yes – thank you!

- Just like CPR, learning how you can help could actually save someone's life.
- We can't just assume someone else will be the one to help.
- The goal is to help this person understand that help is available.
- Then you would let an adult take over who can line up next steps and care.
- Please remember, you are NOT responsible for someone taking their own life.



## Slide 8

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**A0**

Omit the word "hard" for any youth facing content! i.e., Difficult, tough...

Author, 2023-11-28T19:39:44.947

## Our model:

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**L**ook for signs  
**E**mpathize & listen  
**A**sk about suicide  
**R**educe the danger  
**N**ext steps

W

LEARN

LEARN is the acronym we use to help remember these potentially life-saving skills.

- **L** stands for **Look for signs**
- **E** stands for **Empathize and listen**
- **A** stands for **Ask about suicide**
- **R** stands for **Reduce the danger**
- **N** stands for **Next steps**

In the next slide, we'll go through a few common warning signs for suicide.

The link to the downloadable LEARN cards is available in your participant packet.



#### FACILITATOR NOTE

*This is a 2-part slide. You will advance to the next slide before you are finished discussing this concept.  
Short on time? Simply walk the audience through these warning signs without their participation.*

Warning signs are clues or signals that someone may be at risk for suicide.

One way to think about warning signs is to think about them in 3 categories:

1. Emotions and feelings
2. Actions and behaviors
3. Experiences

#### ACTIVITY

Many people already have some idea of what they should keep an eye out for.

We would like to hear from you – what do you think are common warning signs for suicide?

*[Wait for audience response]*

Thank you for sharing!

We will look at additional warning signs on the next slide, many of which you already identified.

Keep in mind that...Not all warning signs are listed on these slides and, not all signs are a cause for concern by themselves.

We do want to be concerned when signs:

- Are a change from someone's usual personality
- Have increased
- Seem related to a painful event, loss, or change

# Look for warning signs



## Emotions, Feelings

- Depression, anxiety
- Anger, irritability, agitation
- Unusual mood swings
- Feeling hopeless/helpless
- Loneliness
- Shame, humiliation
- Emotional/physical pain
- Sudden unexplainable joy after a period of depression

## Actions, Behaviors

- Withdrawing
- Isolating
- Substance use
- Giving away prized possessions
- Acquiring lethal means
- Risky/reckless behavior
- Joking/frequent statements about death
- Self-injury
- Threats against self or others

## Experiences

- Significant life changes or loss
- Bullying, harassment
- Discrimination linked to sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or race/ethnicity
- Personal and/or historical trauma
- Previous suicide attempts or family history of suicide
- Access to lethal means

W

LEARN

This is a list of common warning signs. Take a minute to glance through each section.

### ACTIVITY

Why do you think sudden, unexplainable joy after a period of depression could be a warning sign for suicide?

*[rhetorical question, pause, let audience consider, then call on a few participants]*

Thank you for your answers!

- It might come from relief in knowing their pain will soon be ending because they have a plan to die.
- This relief can be mistaken for a sign that their depression has lifted.

Let's look at a few actions and behaviors.

- Alcohol decreases inhibitions. It also increases impulsivity, depressive or negative feelings and all-or-none thinking.
- Self-injury can be a warning sign for suicide BUT, it can also occur without suicidal intent. It is most often used to regulate emotional pain vs ending one's life.
  - Never ignore self-injury - it indicates a need for care whether the person has suicidal intent or not.

Finally, we'll look at a few experiences that may increase someone's risk for suicide.

- Discrimination, racism, personal and/or historical trauma, and violence linked to identity significantly contribute to suicide risk.

## Scenario: What are the signs?



A friend of yours has started to open up about how much stress they're under. You've heard about the arguments at home for "being irresponsible, not telling the truth, and being a negative influence on younger siblings." Lately they've been acting pretty intense, even with friends. Their mood swings have lasted several weeks now. You've been wondering what else might be going on since they've also been really out of it at school and missing practice.

You look at your phone and see this post.  
*...Why should I care, this is all so pointless*

**W**

**LEARN**

Let's see if we can identify warning signs in this situation.

Who would like to read the scenario out loud?

### ACTIVITY

What are the warning signs we should consider?

I'll give everyone a few seconds to think about this scenario before calling on a few of you.

Now, write down a few of these warning signs under Question 3 on your worksheet.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- These are all common signs of stress among teens.
- By themselves, they may not seem like a big deal.
- Notice when they become a pattern or are a big change from their typical behavior.

Next up, we'll talk about one of life's most important skills and how we can use it.

# Debrief



What do we notice in ourselves/others when we're not okay?

- How do stressful things build/pile up?
- What helps?

What did it feel like to watch the cups pile up?

- What did you notice?
- What would have helped in the moment?

What gets in the way of asking for help?

**W**



## Slide 13

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**A0**

instead of "these things" I wonder about saying "stressful things" or something like that.

Author, 2024-04-24T01:04:36.556

## Session 2: Empathize, Acknowledge, and Ask!

- Session 2: Empathize, Acknowledge, and Ask!

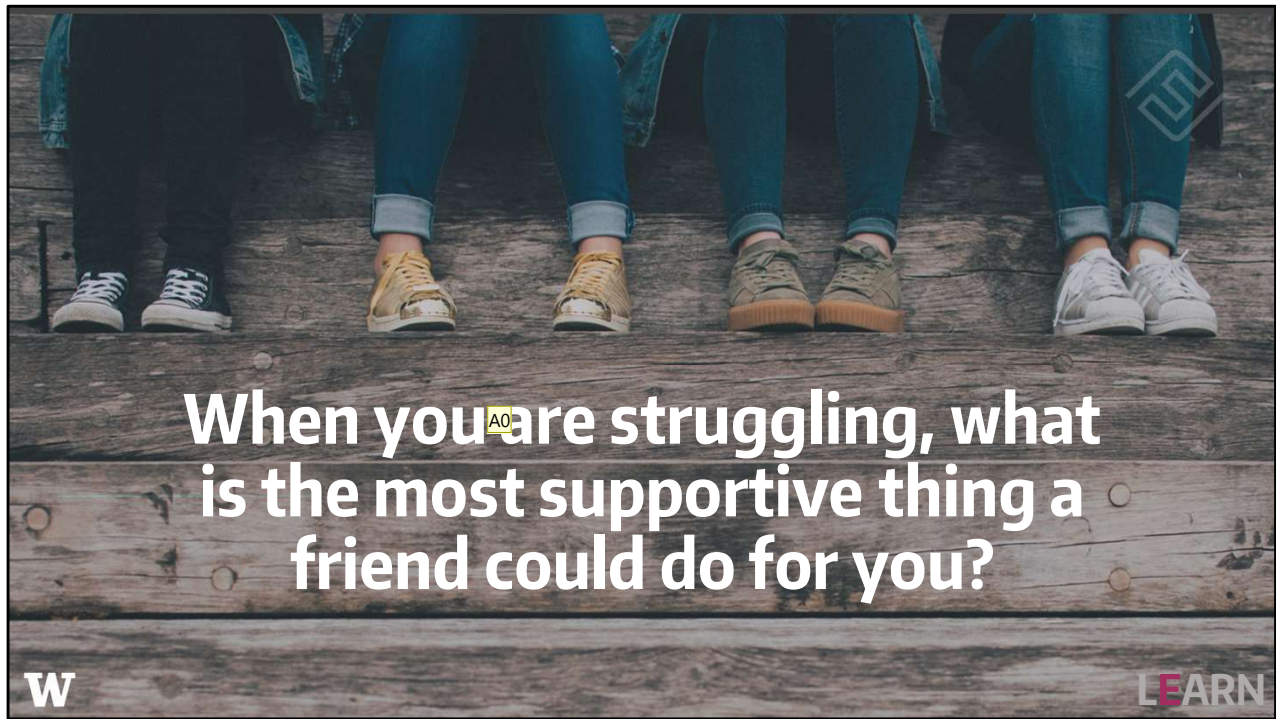
**Objective: Build Skills in Empathy, Validation, learn how to ask about suicide (Forefronts E and A steps in LEARN).**

- What is Empathy?
- How to ask about Suicide
- Small Groups

WA State SEL Benchmarks:

- 4a – Demonstrates awareness of other people's **emotions, perspectives,** cultures, languages, histories, identities, and abilities.
- 5a – Demonstrates a range of communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
- 6a – Demonstrates a sense of school and community responsibility.





Now let's imagine that someone tells you that they are struggling.

What would empathy look like to you?

If you're not sure, it may help to think about a time when you were having a painful experience and needed to be seen and validated, or you can ask the person sharing what would be most helpful.

Does anyone want to volunteer an answer?

Thanks for your answers!

**A0**

Just a thought...Would it be more normalizing to say "When you are struggling..."

Author, 2024-04-24T01:07:44.344

# An Example of Empathy



W

LEARN

## FACILITATOR NOTE:

*If your school has more time, or you've seen Brown talk about Empathy before, consider using this example from the movie 'Inside Out' to demonstrate skillful empathy and validation. You could also use it after the elephant slide to deepen the examples provided before practicing this skill.*

If embedded video does not connect on click, use this link to view the streaming version:

<https://youtu.be/QT6FdhKriB8?t=6>

Raise your hand if you've seen the movie 'Inside Out.'

Let's watch a quick clip and notice what happens for BingBong, Joy and Sadness.

This clip gives helpful examples of:

- Empathy and what it means.
- The difference between empathy and sympathy.
- How empathy can create meaningful connections with people.

# Components of empathy

**Helpful things to say:**  
*I'm so glad you told me.*  
*Tell me more, I'm listening.*



**Try to see the  
world as others  
see it**



**Be non-  
judgmental**



**Validate  
another's  
feelings**



**Communicate  
understanding**

**W**

**LEARN**

Even if we know what empathy is, sometimes it can still be hard to demonstrate it in the moment.

Here are 4 components of empathy:

1. See the world as others see it.
2. Be nonjudgmental.
3. Validate another's feelings.
4. Communicate that understanding.

You don't need to agree with someone's feelings or fully understand why they feel the way they do, but you do need to understand HOW they feel and share that back with them.

People who've survived suicide attempts say listening is what they needed most.

What are one or two other ways we could show empathy?

Thanks for sharing!

## Help others feel heard and valued

Give your full attention  
Show that you're listening  
Listen without judgment

## Use active listening skills

Repeat, rephrase, and reflect  
Ask open-ended questions  
Keep an open mind

# Acknowledging & Asking



W

LEARN

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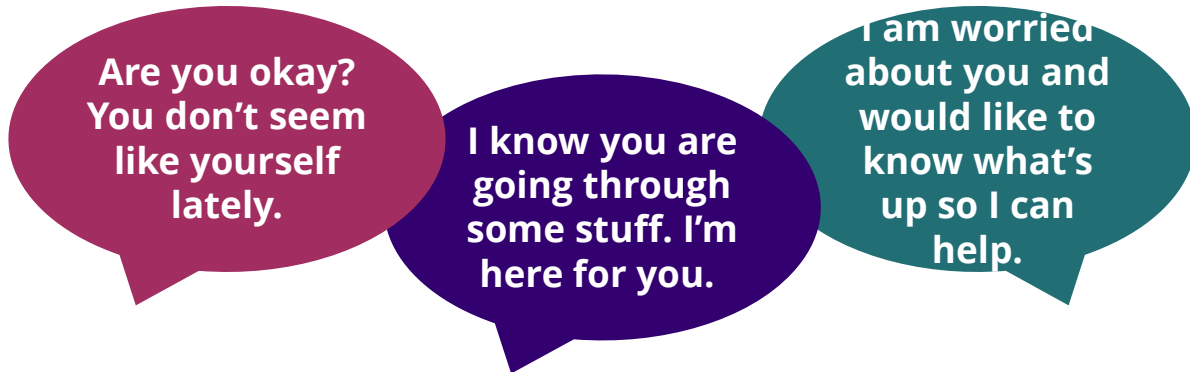
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# Acknowledge



**W**

**LEARN**

This next skill can be uncomfortable. It will take some practice.

So... how do we ask someone about suicide?

- The best advice is to ask directly.
- This means being courageous, direct, and avoiding vague or judgmental language.

Here are examples of how to ask:

- *Are you thinking about suicide?*
- *Are you thinking about killing yourself?*

If we can't say the word, neither can they. When we ask directly, we...

- Communicate that we're open and willing to discuss a complex topic.
- Invite the person to be honest.
- Show that we care about them and what happens to them.
- Give them an opportunity to share their burden and not feel so alone.

If these feel too difficult to say, here are some other ways to ask:

- *"Are you thinking of ending your own life?"*
- The important thing is to be direct and avoid vague or judgmental language.



# Ask about suicide, if needed



Sometimes when people are...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

they're thinking about suicide.

Are you thinking about  
suicide?

Insert any warning signs  
you see here!

## **Examples of Warning Signs:**

*Isolating from friends*

*Feeling alone*

*Upset after a breakup*

*Hopeless about their future*

*Feeling like giving up*

**W**

**LEARN**

We've talked about the importance of using direct language.

Now we'll learn a way to bring it up in a conversation.

Forefront recommends asking like this:

"Sometimes when people are [insert any warning signs here] they're thinking about suicide."

"Are you thinking about suicide?"

Using this phrase is really helpful because...

- Saying "people" and "they" helps to normalize their experiences and thoughts.
- The warning signs you've heard or observed become part of the ask.
- It shows you've been listening to what they are going through.

ACTIVITY - (Time: 1 minute)

Now, turn to a partner and practice this prompt out loud.

1. Practice asking the question using signs from the menu on the slide.
2. Then, switch roles so that you and your partner both get a chance to practice.

DEBRIEF

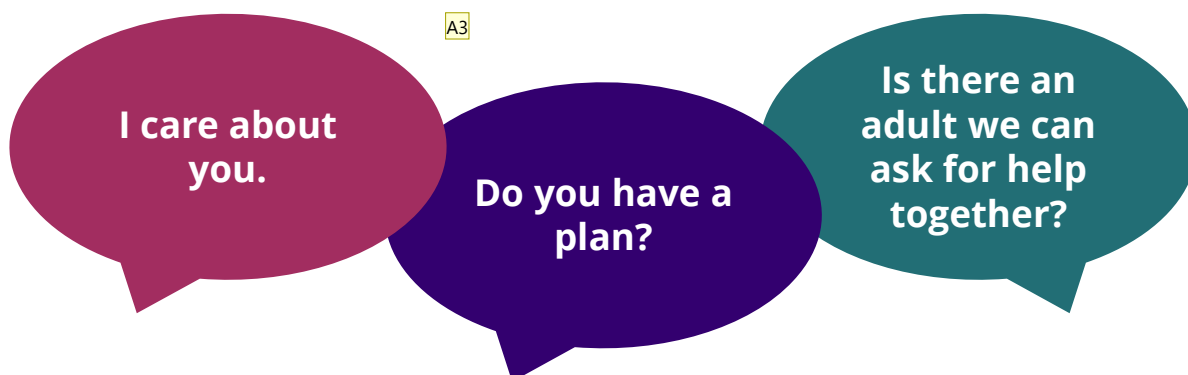
How did it feel to say the word “suicide?”

Remember, if you can’t say the word suicide yet, try saying...

- “Are you thinking about ending your life?”
- “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

A4

## Important follow up, if suicide comes up



**IF SOMEONE HAS A PLAN, ALWAYS TELL A TRUSTED ADULT**

**W**

**LEARN**

They've just said YES, so...

- Asking clarifying questions is recommended.
- This is a crucial time to ask for specific information.

Here are a few questions you can start with.

- Have you thought about how you might end your life?
- Do you have access to those methods?
- Have you thought about when you might do this?

Asking these follow-up questions will...

- Help to understand this person's level of risk.
- Help gather necessary information that you would pass on to a trusted adult.
- Help determine whether or not this is an emergency.

Asking about lethal means can help save lives, but...

- Not everyone is comfortable asking these questions. That's OK.
- If you do ask, always pass this information on to a trusted adult for next steps.

## Slide 21

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- A0** "Do you have access to the \_\_\_\_\_?"  
"pills, guns, etc"  
Author, 2023-11-14T18:09:28.861
- A1** Refer to an adult  
Author, 2023-11-21T23:16:11.705
- A2** This slide needs to be different.  
Author, 2023-11-21T23:16:24.409
- A3** Who are the trusted adults...  
Author, 2023-11-21T23:16:56.729
- A3 0** Seatbelt analogy? Spectrum of risk and knowledge.  
Author, 2023-11-21T23:18:22.156
- A4** "Lethal Means" (in presenter notes) needs a simpler definition for our youth audiences. i.e., "ways to die."  
Author, 2023-11-28T20:22:27.038

# What to do next?



**Don't give up**



**Keep  
connecting**



**Handle trust  
with care**



**Get adult help**

**W**

**LEARN**

If your first attempt at a hard conversation doesn't go so well, maybe they weren't ready to talk. Show them you are there. Stay available, and continue to check in

Even if your offer to connect isn't accepted, it's okay to let them know you are there if they change their mind. Let them know you aren't going anywhere.

Show you care by avoiding gossip. Balance their trust with care and know when you need to get more support.

You don't need to handle a fire on your own, don't be afraid to reach out to help from a parent, teacher, counselor or another adult you trust.

# Debrief



What would you want someone to do for you if they were worried about you?

- What would they say?
- What would they do?

What are the barriers to acknowledging you or someone else is struggling?

What are the ways you would tell a friend you were worried about them?

What would you do if you didn't know what to say?

What do you do when someone asks you to keep their struggles a secret?

**W**

## Slide 23

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**A0** should this be "Where or Who would you go to..." since "who" is listed second?  
Author, 2024-04-24T01:12:33.871

**A0 0** How about What would you do if you didn't know what to say?  
Author, 2024-04-24T15:51:48.783

## Session 3: Next Steps = Trusted Adults



- Session 3: Next Steps = Trusted Adults

**Objective: Identify Trusted Adults in EPS and larger community + their collective characteristics, Share appreciation of Trusted Adults**

- How to ask for help?
- Who are the trusted adults?
- Small Group: Trusted Adults Activity
- School Resources, Community Resources

WA State SEL Benchmarks:

- 2b – Demonstrates responsible decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- 3b – Demonstrates problem solving-skills to engage responsibly in a variety of situations.
- 5b – Demonstrates the ability to identify and take steps to resolve interpersonal conflict in constructive ways.
- 6a – Demonstrates a sense of school and community responsibility.





# How do I ask for help?



## Using this format can help...

- **D**escribe the situation
- **E**xpress your feelings and opinions about the situation
- **A**sk for what you need
- **R**einforce your ask with the possible outcomes your ask (positive and/or negative)

## It could look like this...

My friend is struggling with their mental health, and I cannot support them by myself.

I am worried about their safety and that they need more support.

Can you help me support them?

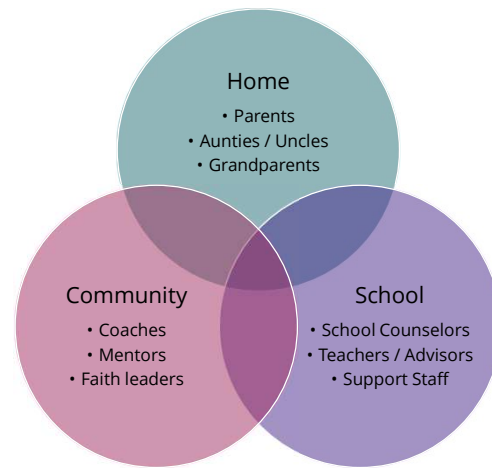
I need to know they are not alone and that I am doing the right thing.

**W**

# Who do I ask: Trusted Adults



- What are the characteristics, skills, attributes, or values of a trusted adult?
- Share an example of a trusted adult you are connected to in your community. Who are they, what do they provide?
- What if there isn't an adult in your life you can connect with?



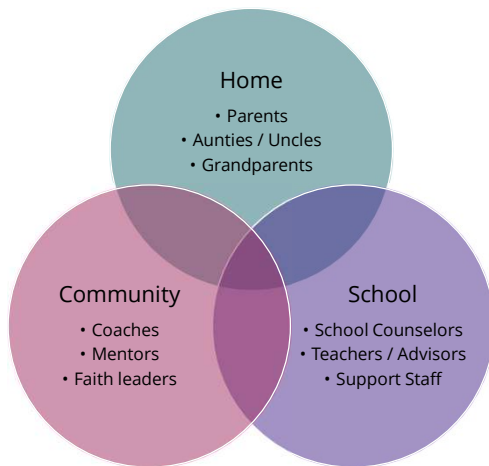
**W**

Who are the trusted adults in your community?

Raise your Hand if you can think of a trusted adult you are connected to in your community.

Who would like to share a story about a trusted adult who's helped them in a hard time?

# Activity: Share Out



- Let's fill the Ven diagram!
  - Who are the trusted adults in YOUR community?
- What does the connection look like when it goes well?
  - When it doesn't go like you wanted – because sometimes it won't – what can you do to get what you need?

**W**

## School Resources

- Counselors
- Teachers
- Advisors
- Coaches
- Learning Support
- School Nurse
- Support Staff
- ... and more!



Who are the trusted adults in your community?

Raise your Hand if you can think of a trusted adult you are connected to in your community.

Who would like to share a story about a trusted adult who's helped them in a hard time?

## Other helpful resources



**Teen Link: Call, Text,  
or Chat 866-833-6546**

• 6-10pm, answered by  
other teens

**Crisis Text Line:  
Text "HEAL" to 741741**

• Mande AYUDA para Español

**Adults who can help -  
parents, coaches,  
counselors, faith  
leaders...**

### **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:**

- Press 1 for veteran services
- Oprima 2 para Español
- Press 3 for the Trevor Project
- Press 4 for Native and Strong in Washington

**988**  
SUICIDE  
& CRISIS  
LIFELINE

**W**

**LEARN**

Part of the N step is getting the person you are concerned about to professionals who can assist. Collaboration, monitoring and linking to crisis resources are all key to helping people stay safe. Every situation will be different, but keep in mind...seeking care in an emergency room is not always necessary.

Here are a few resources for crisis support.

- **988** is a national initiative that can answer questions and connect you with a trained counselor to discuss suicide or other crises related to mental health, substance use, and any other emotional challenges. They also provide steps on how to connect someone online who may be in crisis to a safety team.
- **Crisis Text Line** has trained volunteer Crisis Counselors who can respond to anyone on a secure online platform that won't show up on a phone bill. Washington residents can text using the keyword 'HEAL.'
- **The Trevor Project and Trans Lifeline** are great resources for our trans/nonbinary and LGBTQ+ youth.
- **911** is an option if someone is in imminent danger. Please be aware that not every community is comfortable or safe with law enforcement present. In most cases, we would recommend trying the following resources first and using this as a last resort.

It's OK to test these crisis lines just to practice. Non-emergency calls are always welcome.

- All of these resources have access to language interpretation and services specific to special populations (like veterans, LGBTQ+ youth, AI/AN communities).
- Remember to stay with the person while they are in crisis.
- If you decide to choose any of these listed resources, contact the resource together.

There are more resources provided in your participant packet and on Forefront's website.

# Thank You cards

Think of a trusted adult in your life – at home, school, or in the community.

Take a moment to think about how this trusted adult has positively impacted you.

Write them a short note to say “Thank you for being a Trusted Adult in my life...”

Next step: Deliver your thank you note to your trusted adult.




**W**



# Thank you!

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Visit us at: [intheforefront.org](https://intheforefront.org)

   intheforefront

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We want to hear from you!  
If you have feedback or questions, please  
reach out to Forefront in the Schools.  
Email: [forefrontschools@uw.edu](mailto:forefrontschools@uw.edu)

