

# 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.

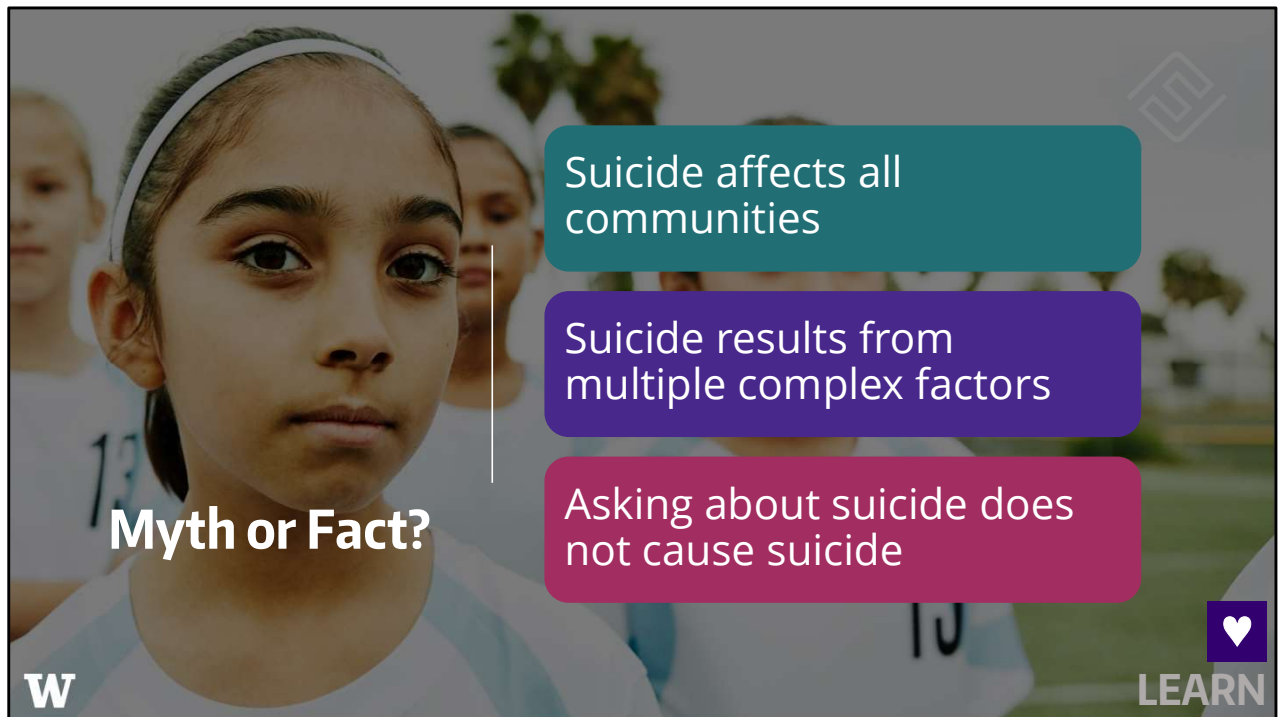




Table top reflections to start – classrooms will need markers, paper, and the ability to make table top tents. This could be done as HW the night before, or in a class activity as part of a larger mental health unit.

#### **Quick and Easy DIY "Name-tag) Tent**

- fold copy paper into three equal parts.
  - write name boldly on the middle section.
  - fold into a 3-d triangle.
  - place in front of desk with facing out.
- 
- FRONT SIDE FACING OUT
    - one word you use to describe mental health – and if needed, names/pronouns (you can skip this part if the class already knows each other well)
  - INTERNAL or HIDDEN part of the TENT:
    - what is one reason mental health is not talked about?
  - BACK SIDE FACING STUDENTS:
    - 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.

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

- People of any background can be at risk for suicide, no matter our identity.
- 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.
- This issue affects everyone, so our staff and parent community also get this training.

Suicide relates to multiple, complex factors:

- Many stories of suicide tend to focus on one cause.
- But, the majority of suicides are due to multiple factors, sometimes going back many years.
- We also know that a death by suicide impacts entire communities

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.

# 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)

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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

Each of you can support positive connections within our school community, on your teams, at home.

We can work together to build coping and problem solving skills.

A photograph of a female teacher with dark hair, wearing a blue denim shirt, leaning over a desk and smiling as she helps three diverse female students. The students are also smiling and looking at a small electronic circuit board on the desk. The background shows a whiteboard with some diagrams and equations. The overall atmosphere is positive and collaborative.

## 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.

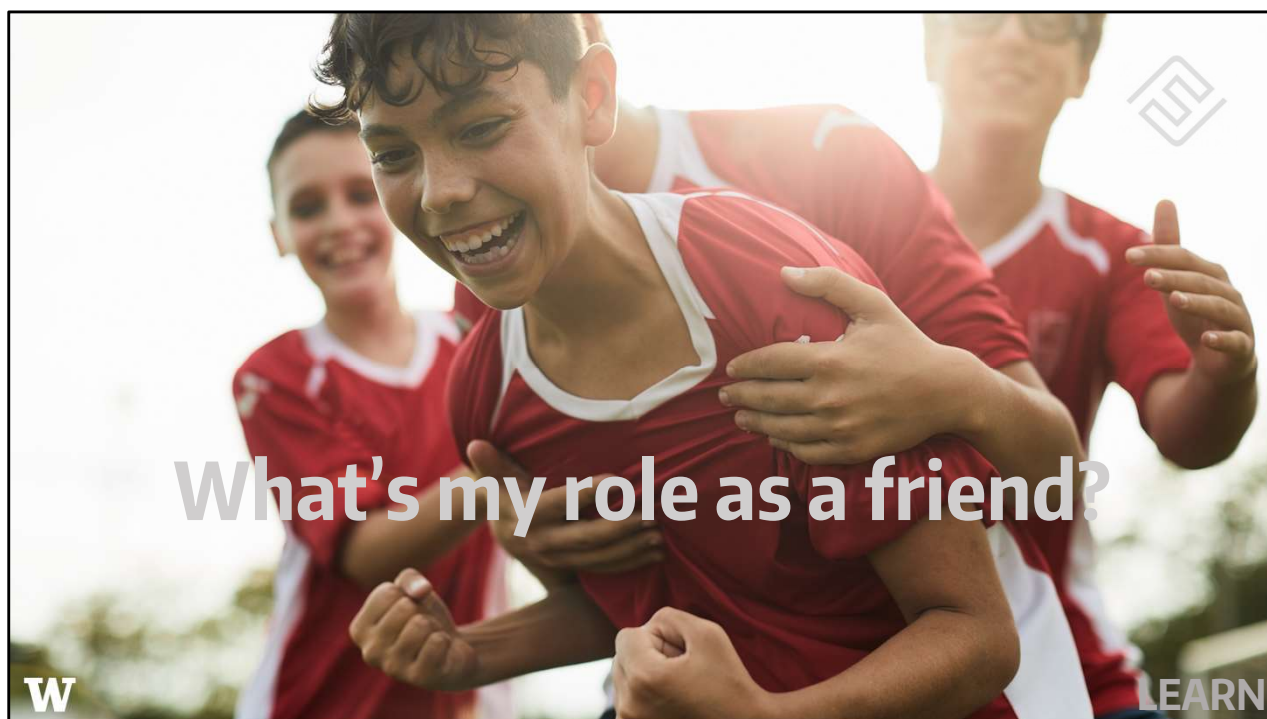
11% of the students in our state do not feel they have a trusted adult to turn to when they are sad or hopeless.

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

**W**

**LEARN**

Suicide Prevention isn't just about suicide – it's also about knowing how to recognize we/or someone we care about are struggling sooner so we can be supported.



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

·Over the next few days you'll learn the signs, how to recognize common warning signs, how to respond, and where to get help.

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.

**W****LEARN**

It's okay to not be okay  
Recognize challenges in ourselves and others  
Be willing to have difficult conversations  
Ask a trusted adult for support



## 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 Forefront uses to help folks recognize and respond to suicide risk.

In session one we will focus on:

- **L** stands for **Look for signs**

In session two we will talk about:

- **E** stands for **Empathize and listen**
- **A** stands for **Ask about suicide**

And in session three we'll do a bit of:

- **R** stands for **Reduce the danger**
  - **N** stands for **Next steps**
- With a focus on connecting to trusted adults.**

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



## Look for signs

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps



W

LEARN

We start with the L step, which stands for “Look for signs.”

Many people who are considering suicide will show warning signs.

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

Signs can indicate a risk for suicide.

- They help us know what actions to take with an individual.
- They can and should be used to start a conversation.

# Look for warning signs



**What they are  
talking about**

**Changes in their  
mood or behavior**

**W**



## 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.*

Again, 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 these categories:

1. What they are talking about
2. Changes in their mood or behavior

## 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!

## Warning signs

- Has there been a change in someone's usual behavior?
- Has there been an increase in how mood or behavior is expressed?
- Have they undergone a painful event, loss, or change?



### Talking about:

- Feeling unbearable pain
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, or trapped
- Feeling shame or anger
- Feeling like a burden
- Death or a recent fascination with death

### Changes in behavior or mood:

- Recent suicide attempt
- Substance use
- Losing interest in appearance or hygiene
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or community
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Giving away possessions or pets
- Depression, emotional distress, and/or anxiety
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Being violent or being a victim of violence
- Recklessness

#### FACILITATOR NOTE

*This slide is animated. Click to reveal the signs underneath the green and red headings.*

We talked on the last slide about the types of warning signs that are indications that someone could be at risk for suicide, and now we'll drill down into what some of those signs are and when to be concerned.

We need to think about what we are seeing and what these signs indicate.

- Has there been a shift in someone's usual personality or behavior?
- Has there been a shift in how behavior or mood is expressed?
- Has there been a painful event, loss, or change in their life?

Asking these questions paired with noticing what someone is talking about, thinking, or doing can be helpful in noticing risk for suicide.

As we look at these "buckets" remember:

- This is not a complete list of warning signs.
- Not everyone shows signs or talks about the pain that they are in.
- Not every sign listed here is cause for concern by itself.

## 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*

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L

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**

**LEARN**

## 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.





## Empathize & Listen



Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps

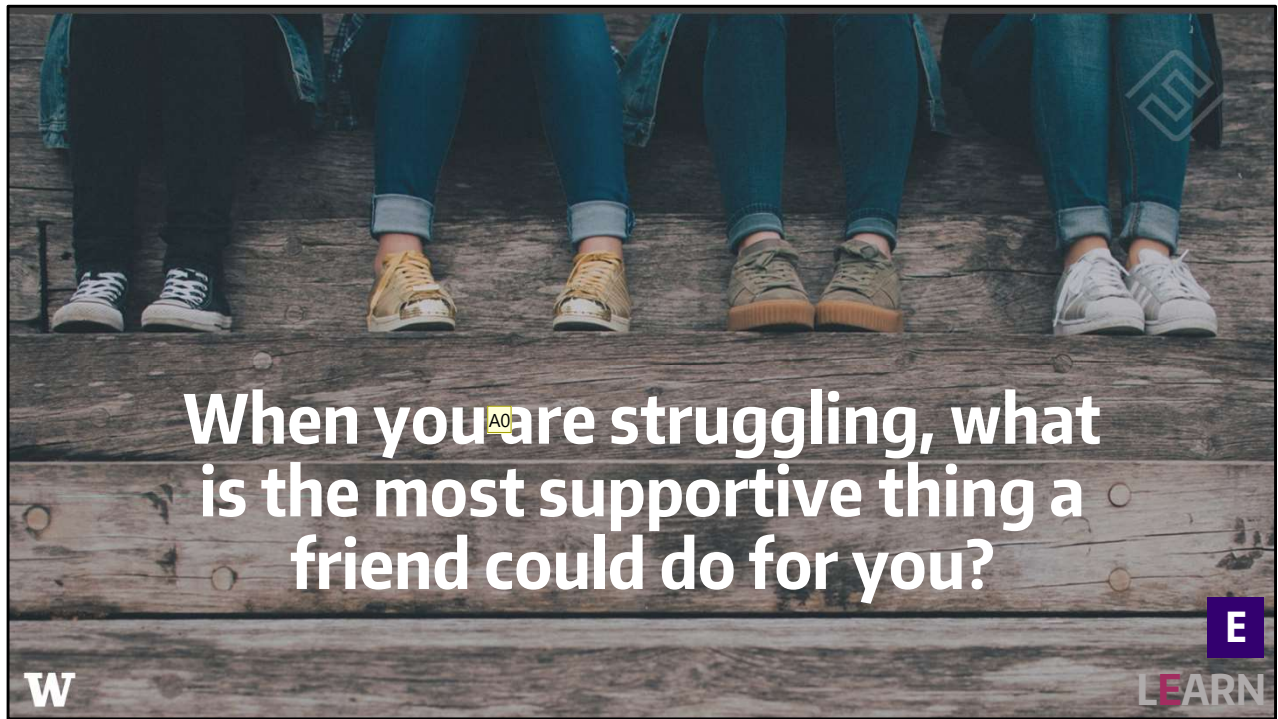
W

LEARN

The next step is Empathize and listen.

Empathy and listening play important roles in deepening everyday relationships and in suicide prevention.





When you are struggling, what is the most supportive thing a friend could do for you?

Does anyone want to volunteer an answer?

Thanks for your answers!

# An Example of Empathy



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LEARN

## *FACILITATOR NOTE:*

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' -- the original one.

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.

YES/NO question to class:

**If empathy is these four things – did Joy demonstrate empathy?**

Then ask for a few brief responses:

**What did you see Sadness do that demonstrated empathy?**

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.

## 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 about suicide

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps



W

LEARN

Now that we've learned how to identify someone in distress and how to build an empathetic connection, we're ready to move on to the A step, "Ask about suicide."

Remember, asking about suicide does not make it more likely that a person will consider suicide.

Asking compassionately can relieve some of the pain and distress that a person is feeling.

This step can be difficult for both the person asking the question and the person answering.

# Acknowledge



Are you okay?  
You don't seem  
like yourself  
lately.

I know you are  
going through  
some stuff. I'm  
here for you.

I am worried  
about you and  
would like to  
know what's up  
so I can help.

**W**

**LEARN**

What are things you or someone else could say to acknowledge/validate that someone is struggling?

These are just a few examples...

How would you say something like this in your own words?

## Acknowledging & Asking



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LEARN

*Here is a quick clip that demonstrates what it might feel like to struggle, what it's like to notice the warning signs, and to acknowledge them.*

# 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**

**A**

**LEARN**

Sometimes when folks are really struggling, when the cups have piled so high they can't see another solution to an impossible problem, they are thinking about suicide. It's important to acknowledge it and ask directly. Research shows that ASKING about suicide does NOT cause SUICIDE, and asking can connect that person to care.

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?"

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps

W

## Reduce the danger



LEARN

Next is the “R” step: Reduce the danger.

This step is about taking practical action to keep someone safe. This means reducing or removing access to things someone could use to end their life.



A4

## Important follow up, if suicide comes up



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

**W****R****LEARN**

If suicide comes up, it's important to show that you care and act as a linkage to care.

- Keep caring – demonstrate empathy, acknowledgement.
- Ask if they have a plan – sharing this information can help keep someone safe if they are seriously considering suicide. Always pass the information on to a trusted adult for next steps.
- Asking about trusted adults helps make sharing/asking for help easier!

# 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**

## Session 3: Next Steps = Asking for Help & Trusted Adults

- Session 3: Next Steps = Asking for Help & 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.





## Next steps

Look for signs

Empathize & listen

Ask about suicide

Reduce the danger

Next steps



W

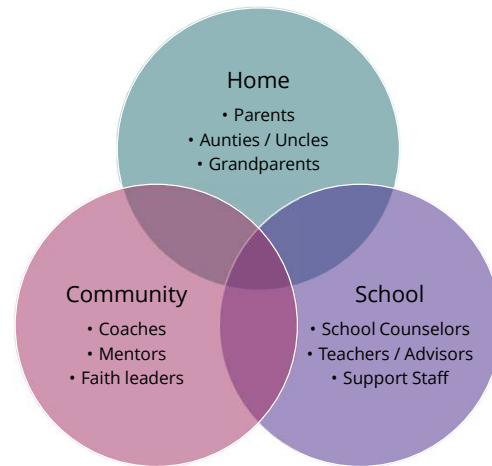
LEARN

The final step in our model is the N step, or “Next steps,” which is about connecting a person in crisis to resources that can help.

# 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**

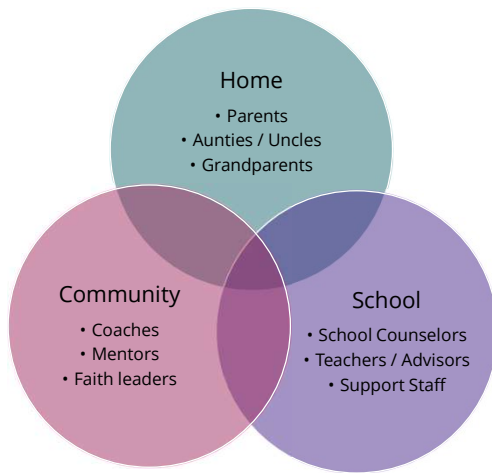
**LEARN**

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**

**LEARN**

# 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**

**N**

**LEARN**

Now that we've identified a number of folks who can help... we have to figure out HOW To ask for help.

You can use this format to ask for help for yourself or someone you care about.

It's clear, direct, and let's the person you are asking for help know this is important to you. And, demonstrates an important **cop**ing and **problem-solving skill you will use throughout your life.**



## School Resources

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



LEARN

Our school has a number of people who are ready to support you.  
We hope you ask for help if and when you need it.

## 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, aunties/uncles,  
coaches, 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**

Maybe identifying a trusted adult at school isn't possible right now. Here are a few resources additional that are available if you are having a hard time, you are worried about a friend and don't know what to do, or there is a crisis situation.

- **Teen Link** is an amazing service that receives calls, texts, chats from 6-10pm every day. All calls at TeenLink are answered by trained teens. It's always confidential, and a great way to get peer to peer support!
- **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.'
- **Other adults...** at home, in your community.
- **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.

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

- If you decide to choose any of these listed resources, contact the resource together.
-

## 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.



Thank you for the work you have put into these last three sessions --

As we close, we want to get back to those protective factors we talked about on Day 1 --

The power of **connections to friends, family, culture, and community and the importance of coping skills.**

**Gratitude is a powerful way to increase connection AND to take care of ourselves. Because of that we're going to take a moment to thank a trusted adult in our lives --**




Please

- 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.

# Thank you!

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

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We want to hear from you!  
If you have feedback or questions, please  
reach out to Forefront in the Schools.  
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