



# CREATING AN EFFECTIVE SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Suicide is a complex and sensitive topic. Stories of suicide deaths or hopeless, demoralizing messages can in some cases increase suicide rates. On the other hand, stories about people who overcome such a crisis can result in lower rates of suicide.

Just like cardiovascular health campaigns emphasize diet and exercises, rather than heart attacks, effective suicide prevention campaigns focus on promoting mental health and resiliency, encouraging help seeking and community dialogue, and reducing stigma.

## When you need to discuss suicide, keep the following strategies in mind:



### Where to focus

- ✔ Sharing stories of recovery and resilience
- ✔ Adapting your message to fit the needs of a specific audience
- ✔ Seeking the advice of suicide prevention experts
- ✔ Using images with people seeking help or conveying messages of hope
- ✔ Highlighting helpful information, e.g., effective treatments, available services, coping strategies
- ✔ Presenting suicide as a tragic exception



### What to avoid

- ! Alarming the public
- ! Blanketing areas with information (e.g. ads on stadium or on buses or on TV)
- ! Presenting grim statistics
- ! Conveying suicide as usual and expected
- ! Using images with stereotypes, crying or sad people, suicide methods
- ! Implying that suicide arises from simple or single causes
- ! Presenting suicide as inevitable or the only option

## How to share your message:

- > Distribute flyers, posters, and materials at relevant events
- > Use media slots that focus on mental health services
- > Leverage well-known mental health advocates and prominent community stakeholders
- > Host events, including those on national dates tied to suicide prevention:
  - World Suicide Prevention Day, September 10<sup>th</sup> each year. Download toolkits and resources from the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention.
  - International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, in mid-November each year. See list of documentaries from the American Foundation for Suicide to use when hosting an event.

Dr. Sinyor, Associate Professor at the Sunnybrook Health Science Centre's Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, provided permission to adapt much of the information in this handout.

Use your smartphone to scan this barcode and take a look at examples of positive mental health promotion activities



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We make a difference!

A Community Suicide Prevention Project  
[www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/roots-hope](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/roots-hope)

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