



HOPE RISING

Office of the Children's Advocate
Suicide Prevention Information

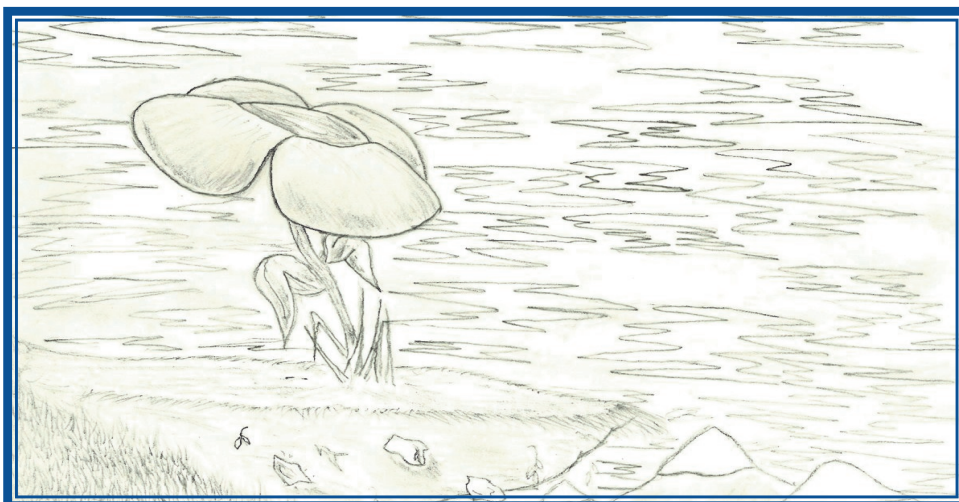
The Language of Suicide

Over time the terms “commit suicide” “successful suicide” “failed suicide attempt” and “completed suicide” have become ingrained in our vocabulary to the extent that they have an apparent naturalness to them. However, like many of the terms and phrases we use, they have negative connotations. For example, the phrase “commit suicide” has criminal overtones as it stems from a time when it was illegal to kill oneself. In Canada, suicide is no longer a criminal act. The word “commit” is still linguistically linked to criminal offenses such as homicide or assault.

The phrases “successful suicide” or “completed suicide” are also problematic as a death by suicide is a tragedy and should not be seen as a success. Likewise, the phrases “unsuccessful suicide attempt” or “failed suicide attempt” are not helpful as they imply that the person is a failure.

The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention has been in the fore front when it comes to a shift in how we talk about suicide, and recommends a shift to the terms “died by suicide” “non-fatal suicide attempt” or just “suicide attempt.”

To learn more about the language of suicide
visit the Centre of Suicide Prevention’s website at:
suicideprevention.ca



CONFERENCE ALERT!

**2013 Canadian
Association for
Suicide Prevention
Conference**

**“Creating New
Pathways:
Trauma-informed
Approaches to Suicide
Prevention”**

Winnipeg, MB.

October 1 & 2, 2013

**For more
information visit:
suicideprevention.ca**

INTERCULTURAL SUICIDE PREVENTION



THE MANITOBA SUICIDE LINE

Call 1-877-435-7170
if you or someone you
know is thinking about
suicide or dealing with
a suicide loss.

reasontolive.ca

Local suicide prevention programs typically encourage open, honest discussion about depression, stress, hopelessness, self-harm, and suicide as a proven, effective approach to preventing suicide deaths. However, this direct-discussion approach should be acknowledged as uncomfortable and stressful for some children and youth, including those who come from cultures in which discussions about suicide are not encouraged, or are avoided altogether.

An approach to encouraging inter-cultural conversations about suicide prevention needs to begin by understanding our own assumptions and biases about suicide. For example, while a youth avoiding eye contact might seem to signal lack of focus or sadness, that youth may merely be uncomfortable with being asked the questions many suicide prevention courses encourage: “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” Other cultural miscues might be a male youth feeling uncomfortable disclosing depression to a female for fear of appearing weak in her eyes.

Culturally-influenced communication is an important issue to consider when communicating with young people about suicide, and yet, ethnic culture is only one of many cultural filters a young person brings to their perspective on the world. The young person may also be influenced by any number of other factors that shape their communication style and preferences. Ultimately, as will be the case when approaching most topics, it is wise to approach the conversation with thoughtful curiosity, compassion, and a goal of collaboration as a sign of respect for all cultures – those which are visible, as well as those which are more hidden.

For more information on suicide prevention and cultural sensitivity visit
the Centre of Suicide Prevention’s website at:
suicideprevention.ca

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