



Words Matter

“Talking about Suicide”

When talking about suicide, avoiding negative or stigmatizing language is essential - equally important is remembering that words can help encourage prevention, awareness, and feelings of hopefulness, as well as support recovery, and healing.

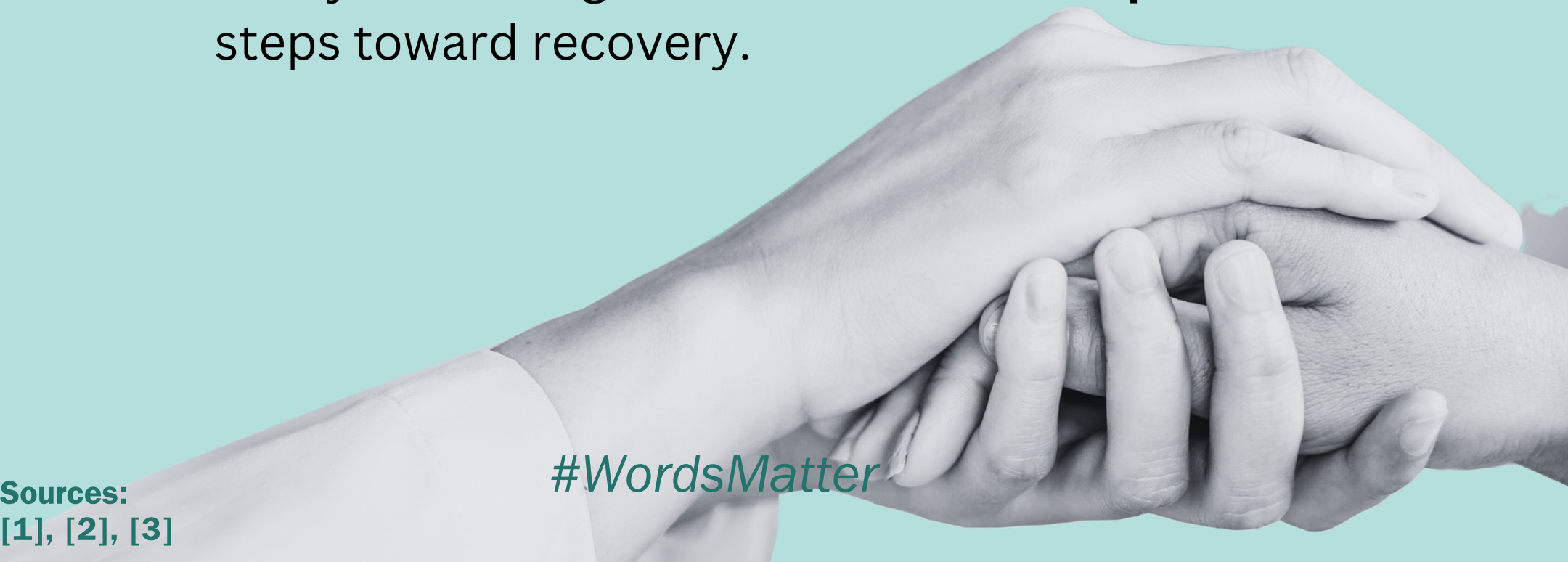
#WordsMatter



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- **Be direct.** Talking to someone about suicide does NOT increase their thoughts of self-harm and does NOT cause people to act on thoughts of self-harm. Talking openly about suicide can actually help a person feel less isolated and scared.
- **Remain positive and hopeful.** People can and do get better.
- Always encourage someone to **seek help** and take steps toward recovery.



"Words Matter - talking about suicide"



Instead of...

- commit
- committed suicide



Say...

- died by suicide
- death by suicide
- lost their life to suicide

Why

"Commit" implies suicide is a crime, that someone is criminal, immoral, or has committed an offense. Using neutral and respectful phrasing like "died by suicide" helps reduce feelings of shame or wrongdoing. Changing our language helps reduce stigma and discrimination around mental health, which can help save lives.



"Words Matter - talking about suicide"



Instead of...

- Successful/Unsuccessful
- Completed/Failed



Say...

- died by.../survived a... suicide attempt
- fatal/non-fatal

Why

Framing suicide as "successful" is problematic and inappropriately presents a tragic event as an accomplishment. Suicides are either fatal or not. Death by suicide is inherently tragic and should not be compared to achieving goals or completing tasks.



"Words Matter - talking about suicide"



Instead of...

<Name> is suicidal

Say...

- <Name> is facing suicide
- Is thinking of suicide
- Has experienced suicidal thoughts

Why

Labelling someone based solely on their encountering suicidal thoughts reinforces stigma and can make seeking help harder; a person is always much more than suicidal thoughts.

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**The language used to
discuss suicide should be:**

People first
Neutral
Factual
Respectful
Compassionate

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Get Help

Access a Crisis Line

All of Canada (Except Quebec)

If you or someone you know is in immediate crisis or has suicide-related concerns, please call 1-833-456-4566 toll free, 24/7
Text to 45645 (4 p.m. – Midnight ET). Text messaging rates apply.
Find more information and resources at **talksuicide.ca**

Quebec

If you or someone you know is in immediate crisis or has suicide-related concerns, please call 1-866-277-3553 toll free, 24/7
Text to 535353. Text messaging rates apply.
Find more information and resources at **suicide.ca**

Frontline Worker Resources

A text line for frontline workers - Text FRONTLINE to 741741
Find more information and resources at **wellnesstogether.ca**

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN IMMEDIATE
DANGER, PLEASE CALL 9-1-1.



Sources

1. Canadian Psychiatric Association's Media Guidelines for Reporting on Suicide (2017).

2. CAMH - Words Matter

<https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/words-matter-suicide-language-guide.pdf>

3. Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) - Language Matters.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/language-matters-safe-communication-suicide-prevention.html>

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Words Matter: Collaborators

CIPSRT

Canadian Institute for Public Safety
Research and Treatment



ICRTSP

Institut canadien de recherche et
de traitement en sécurité publique

Canadian Institute for
Pandemic Health
Education and Response

CIPHER



ICEISP

Institut canadien
d'éducation et d'intervention
en santé en cas de pandémie

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