

Selecting an Educational Video on Youth Suicide Prevention: Some Considerations

Endorsed by the American Association of Suicidology, 2007

Teaching young people how to help a friend is an important part of a comprehensive school based suicide prevention strategy. Educational videos that teach basic suicide prevention skills are often a helpful part of the instruction. *Videos are most effectively used with an accompanying curriculum and as part of a larger presentation on mental health, mental illness and helping friends in distress.* However, sometimes videos are marketed and sold separately or become separated from the intended curriculum. With that in mind, here are some tips for selecting carefully.

LOOK FOR:

- ◆ Videos that **teach, model and emphasize developmentally appropriate help-giving and help-seeking behaviors** and that provide information on finding help. The focus should be on “HOW TO RESPOND” or “HOW TO GET HELP”. In-house resources and local crisis numbers should be highlighted along with instruction.
- ◆ Videos that **emphasize prevention and teach students that suicide is preventable.** We want to reinforce the idea that there are preventative actions students can take to help protect themselves and their friends.
- ◆ Videos in which the **heroes, or main characters, are the helpers.**
- ◆ Videos that **highlight effective treatments for underlying mental health problems.** We want students to know that effective treatments for illnesses like depression and addiction are available AND that getting treatment is an important way to prevent suicide.
- ◆ Videos that are **short enough** to allow time for discussion as part of that day’s lesson.

AVOID:

- ◆ **Avoid videos that depict someone engaging in suicidal behavior or that describe methods of suicide.** This can actually increase risk for suicidal behavior among vulnerable youth.
- ◆ **Avoid videos that *primarily* depict previously depressed or suicidal youth describing their depression and/or suicidal behavior.** This can inadvertently glorify or romanticize suicidal thinking and behavior.
- ◆ **Avoid videos in which the primary focus is on someone who has died by suicide.**
- ◆ **Avoid videos that present suicide/suicidal thinking as normal in teens** or as a common reaction to stress. Most young people who experience stress do not consider suicide.
- ◆ **Avoid showing videos on suicide prevention to large groups or assemblies** of young people. This is a topic that is best addressed in small groups and with support staff on hand.

For more information and to see a list of videos recommended by the American Association of Suicidology: Go to the American Association of Suicidology website at suicidology.org and click on ‘media’.