

BEHIND HAPPY FACES

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES: These outcomes show what knowledge and skills participants should gain from the lesson. It is crucial you review the goals of the lesson with the members so they know what they will learn.



HANDOUT: It is time to distribute a handout/materials to participants. These can be found at the end of each lesson if it includes a handout. Make copies in advance!



WRITE ON FLIP CHART: The main points are included in PowerPoint presentations. In the event you do not have access to a computer/projector, write examples and instructions on flip chart paper in the front of the room.



GROUP DISCUSSION: It is time to prompt participants with questions or dialogue for group discussion.



INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY: It is time for an activity, like scenarios or a game. These activities help participants feel more connected to the information.



INSTRUCTIONS: Read information or directions aloud to the groups.



WATCH THE VIDEO: Each lesson includes videos to help introduce the topic and engage viewers to take part in the lessons. It is important to make sure you test them in advance to make sure the video and audio work on your technology—either DVD player or computer and speakers.

Lesson 5: Before the Breakdown

The Before the Breakdown lesson helps members learn tips on what actions to take when someone is suicidal. This lesson is important in helping members be better prepared to assist their friends/brothers. For college students who have had suicidal thoughts, 67 percent report they first disclosed them to a friend. Most people also first disclose others serious mental health challenges to friends. Helping members be prepared to take action during times of crisis is a necessary step for intervention and prevention of worst-case scenarios.

Facilitator

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in others areas of campus life. If you have a member who is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, he could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

Time needed:

18 minutes

Objectives:



- Identify warning signs of someone who may be experiencing a severe mental health breakdown.
- Differentiate the differences between what a friend can do and what can only be done by a mental health professional.

Setting:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Members will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will be playing a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so you will need a computer connected to a projector and screen.

Group size:

- Ideal groups should be 7 members or no larger than 10 to make sure connections and conversations remain personal.
- If your chapter has more than 200 men, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.

Materials needed:

- Projector and Screen
- “Before the Breakdown” PowerPoint
- “Before the Breakdown” Video

BEFORE THE BREAKDOWN VIDEO (3 MINUTES):



This video features Ross Szabo introducing the lesson about what to do when someone is having suicidal thoughts. *Play the “Before the Breakdown Video” for the large group.* **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES):

INTRODUCTION



- We’re going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for members. Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each others during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each others. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Sixty-seven percent of college students first disclose suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges to a friend. That means you are all on the front lines of mental health. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- When a person is suicidal, the steps we learned in the Talk to a Brother lesson change. The approach is more direct, and it’s vital to take action. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In many situations, people care about a friend, but don’t know what signs to look for that they may seriously be contemplating suicide.
- In your small groups write down all of the warning signs that you know for someone who is contemplating suicide. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE

- Now let’s come back together and make a list of the warning signs together. What do you think the signs are? Call them out and I’ll write them down. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



FACILITATOR NOTES:

Write down the warning signs that someone is suicidal on a flip chart piece of paper as members say them aloud. After you create your list go over the main signs with the PowerPoint.

SUMMARIZE

Let’s go over a list from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to ensure we covered all of the warning signs. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- Talking about wanting to kill himself, or saying he wishes he was dead.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as hoarding medicine or buying a gun.
- Talking about a specific suicide plan.
- Consistently feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Feeling trapped, desperate or needing to escape from an intolerable situation.
- Having the feeling of being a burden to others.
- Feeling humiliated.
- Having intense anxiety and/or panic attacks.
- Losing interest in things or losing the ability to experience pleasure.
- Insomnia.

- Becoming socially isolated and withdrawn from friends, family and others.
- Acting irritable or agitated in a highly unusual manner.
- Showing rage, or talking about seeking revenge for being victimized or rejected, whether or not the situations the person describes seem real. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The actions you take when someone is thinking about suicide are important. Here are the main actions to take:
 - Try to get them to a professional.
 - Know the warning signs.
 - Do not handle the person alone.
 - Be direct with your questions about suicide.
 - Do not judge.
 - Do not keep secrets. If someone tells you he is thinking about suicide you should share it with a chapter president or the counseling center.
 - Remove harmful objects.
 - Never leave the person alone. When someone is suicidal it's vital to make sure that someone is always with him.
 - Call for help. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (5 MINUTES) :

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SUICIDE

INSTRUCTIONS:



- When someone is suicidal it's difficult to know what to say.
- We're going to go over some of the most frequently asked questions about suicide from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: If someone really wants to end their life, is there anything I can do to stop them?

- A: Most of the time, when someone thinks or talks about suicide they actually have mixed feelings about dying. Most often, suicidal feelings come from having a mental illness, and these illnesses can be treated with professional help.
- Medication, talk therapy, or a combination of the two has been shown to save lives. The best way to help is to encourage and assist the suicidal person to get the help they need. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: What should I do if I encourage a suicidal person to get help but they refuse?

- A: To someone feeling suicidal, depressed or anxious, the idea of talking to a doctor or mental health professional can seem overwhelming. Sometimes suicide seems like the only way to control their pain.
- Continue to tell them that you're concerned about them, and to suggest that a professional who understands what they are feeling can help them to feel better.
- Let them know you're there to listen, and offer help finding or getting to a doctor, mental health professional, or hospital emergency room.
- You can also help by staying with them and calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. If you're concerned they will hurt themselves call 911. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: If a friend confides in me that they are thinking of suicide and makes me promise not to tell, shouldn't I respect their right to privacy?

- A: Privacy is very important, but your friend's life is even more important.
- Depression and other mental disorders may be distorting their judgment and leading them to want to hurt themselves.
- Even if you lose your friendship, saving a life is the most important priority.
- Tell someone you trust about your friend and ask for their assistance getting them to a professional. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: My friend purposely cuts himself when he is upset. Is this the same as making a suicide attempt?

- A: Some people cut or otherwise hurt themselves when they feel overwhelmed by difficult or stressful feelings, or to relieve their inner tension.
- Many people who cut themselves never attempt to kill themselves. However, in some cases, self-harm is the first indication that someone may be at risk for suicidal behavior.
- Whether or not they feel an impulse to take their own lives, someone who is cutting or otherwise hurting themselves needs help.
- Health and mental health professionals are trained to determine whether a person is at risk for suicide, and to suggest a treatment plan to help them with their self-harm behavior and underlying feelings. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: Is someone who has had suicidal thoughts or a recent attempt and is now feeling better still at risk for suicide?

- A. Successful treatment for serious depression or suicidal behavior significantly reduces the long-term risk for suicide.
- It can be difficult to know while a suicidal person is in their recovery.
- Someone who has felt suicidal may work hard to hide his feelings, and may appear to be functioning well socially, professionally or academically. In some cases, a person who has made the decision to die may seem calmer and at peace.
- Each year suicide claims the lives of people who seem happy, well liked and successful to his friends, families and others around them.
- Staying in treatment after the suicidal thoughts and symptoms seem to be getting better is the best way to ensure a successful recovery. The decision to stop treatment should be made together by the mental health professional and patient. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

WRAP-UP:

- The goal of this lesson was to provide you with tips on what you might be able to do to help a friend.
- This advice should never take the place of professional help or guidance. If you are worried about a friend, please talk to a counselor, mental health professional or call 1-800-273- TALK (8255). **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- We gave you signs to look for when a friend is suicidal, but this does not mean you are trained to treat someone who is suicidal. The most important thing a friend can do when someone he cares about is in crisis is get that person to a mental health professional.
- If you need to talk to someone about your mental health, the campus counseling center is a great place to start. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**