

World Suicide Prevention Day: Changing the Narrative, Saving Lives

September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day, an annual observance dedicated to raising awareness about suicide prevention, reducing stigma, and reminding communities that everyone has a role to play in supporting people who may be struggling.

Established in 2003 by the International Association for Suicide Prevention in conjunction with the World Health Organization, World Suicide Prevention Day brings attention to suicide as a major public health issue and promotes action to help prevent suicide around the world.

Changing the Narrative on Suicide

The theme for World Suicide Prevention Day from 2024 through 2026 is “Changing the Narrative on Suicide.” The campaign encourages people to move away from silence, shame, and misunderstanding and toward open, compassionate conversations about suicide and mental health.

Changing the narrative does not mean having all the answers. It means creating an environment where people feel safe asking for help, talking about emotional pain, and connecting with support without fear of judgment.

It also means recognizing that suicide prevention is more than an individual responsibility. Communities, schools, workplaces, health-care organizations, governments, families, and friends all have a role in creating systems where people can access appropriate care and support.

Why Suicide Prevention Matters

Suicide affects people of every age and background and can have a profound impact on families, friends, coworkers, and entire communities. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 700,000 people die by suicide globally each year.

While suicide is a complex issue influenced by many factors, suicide can be prevented. Prevention efforts can include improving access to mental-health and crisis services, reducing stigma, strengthening social connections, identifying people who may be at risk, and implementing evidence-based prevention strategies.

Start the Conversation

One of the simplest ways to participate in World Suicide Prevention Day is to make time for someone.

If you are concerned about a friend, family member, coworker, student, or neighbor, reaching out can be meaningful. A simple question such as *“How are you really doing?”* can open the door to a conversation.

Listen without immediately trying to solve the problem. Avoid judgment or dismissive comments, and encourage the person to connect with a trusted individual or qualified professional when additional support is needed.

It is also important to remember that asking someone about suicide does not require you to become their counselor. You can listen, show compassion, and help connect them with appropriate resources.

Help Is Available

In the United States, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free, confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. People can call or text 988 or use the online chat to connect with a trained counselor. You do not have to be suicidal to contact 988; the service is also available for people experiencing emotional distress or simply needing someone to talk to.

This September 10th, consider changing the narrative by starting a conversation, offering support, sharing reliable resources, and reminding the people around you that they do not have to face difficult moments alone.

If you are interested in assisting with efforts to prevent suicide, please contact the Gallia-Jackson-Meigs Suicide Prevention Collaborative. Audrey Jones is the contact audrey.jones@hopewellhealth.org.

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