

## 10 top tips for reporting suicide

**Sensitive reporting can inform and educate the public about suicide, encouraging important conversations and promoting help seeking. However, research evidence shows that some forms of media coverage can lead to increases in suicide rates.**

These 10 top tips and Samaritans' resources for journalists reinforce industry codes of practice to support the highest standards of safe coverage of suicide.

- 01** Avoid reporting methods of suicide, such as describing someone as having died by hanging, particularly in headlines.
- 02** Include references to suicide being preventable and signpost sources of support, such as Samaritans' helpline. This can encourage people to seek help, which could save lives.  
*When life is difficult, Samaritans are here – day or night, 365 days a year. You can call them for free on 116 123, email them at [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org), or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) to find your nearest branch.*
- 03** Steer clear of language that sensationalises or glorifies suicide. Avoid dramatic headlines and strong terms such as 'suicide epidemic'. Never suggest that someone died instantly or that their death was quick, easy, painless, inevitable or a solution to their problems.
- 04** Don't refer to a specific site or location as popular or known for suicides, for example, 'notorious site' or 'hot spot' and refrain from providing information, such as the height of a bridge or cliff.
- 05** Avoid dramatic, emotive or sensational pictures or video footage. Excessive imagery can glamourise a death and lead vulnerable individuals to over-identify with the deceased.
- 06** Avoid excessive amounts of coverage and overly prominent placement of stories, such as a frontpage splash, and do not link to previous stories about suicide.
- 07** Treat social media with caution and avoid mentioning or linking to comments, or websites/forums that promote or glamourise suicide. Similarly, it is safer not to open comments sections on suicide stories and careful consideration should be given to the appropriateness of promoting stories through push notifications.
- 08** Including content from suicide notes or similar messages left by a person who has died should be avoided. This could increase the likelihood of people identifying with the deceased. It may also romanticise a suicide and cause distress to bereaved family and friends.
- 09** Speculation about the cause of a suicide can oversimplify the issue and should be avoided. Suicide is extremely complex and most of the time there is no single event or factor that leads someone to take their own life.
- 10** Young people are more susceptible to suicide contagion. When covering the death of a young person, do not give undue prominence to the story or repeat the use of photographs, including galleries. Don't use emotive, romanticised language or images. Coverage that sensitively reflects the wider issues around suicide, including that it is preventable, can help reduce the risk of suicidal behaviour. Include clear and direct references to resources and support organisations.



### How Samaritans can help you

Samaritans' Media Advisory Service also provides free advice and training to support informed and safe coverage. Journalists and programme makers can get in touch directly with enquiries about suicide content, including breaking news, at: [mediaadvice@samaritans.org](mailto:mediaadvice@samaritans.org)