



Person-First Language: Suicide Prevention

Suicide is very complex and often misunderstood. Stigma can prevent people from discussing their experiences and from seeking help when they need it.

The language we use to speak about suicide is very important and can help break down the stigma that people experience. Using person-first language to talk about suicide ensures the person is seen as a person first, before the struggles they are navigating.

Respectful	Stigmatizing	Explanation
Died by suicide Death by suicide Lost their life to suicide	Commit/committed suicide	This phrase comes from a time in the past when suicide was considered a crime. Using this language promotes the idea that people who die by suicide have done something criminal.
Died by suicide Suicide attempt	Successful/ Unsuccessful suicide attempt Completed/Failed Suicide	Avoids suggesting that dying by suicide is succeeding. Every death by suicide is a tragedy.
<Name> is living with thoughts of suicide. <Name> is experiencing thoughts of suicide <Name> is thinking of suicide.	< Name> is suicidal	Focuses on what the person is experiencing rather than labelling them.
A person who may need support for thoughts of suicide	They're a suicidal risk	Shows care and support rather than defining the person by risk.
A person living with mental health challenges	People like that are unstable	Avoids judgmental language and reduces stigma.

A person who is asking for help	They are just attention seeking	Focuses on what behavior they may be communicating rather than judging the person's intent.
A person who is talking about suicide or ending their life A person who is experiencing thoughts of ending their life by suicide	They are threatening suicide	Keeps language factual and avoids alarmist wording.