be nice. Schools / be nice. Classroom Series

Safety Protocol & Response Plan

Purpose:

The purpose of this safety protocol is to provide clear guidance for **be nice. facilitators, educators, and program staff** when a participant is identified as experiencing emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, or a mental health crisis. While **be nice.** is an upstream mental health and suicide prevention education program and is not intended to provide clinical treatment, **all facilitators are trained to recognize warning signs and connect individuals to appropriate supports using the be nice. action plan: notice, invite, challenge, empower.**

be nice. Safety Protocol

Prior to the start of any **be nice.** programming, facilitators will **identify and verify** the **designated school mental health professional or crisis response staff member** who will receive a warm handoff if a participant requires additional support.

Programming should not begin until the designated individual is confirmed to be on site, available during the presentation, and willing to accept responsibility for responding to participants identified as needing immediate support.

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notice

- **At the beginning of the presentation (including each lesson of the be nice. Classroom Series), participants are given clear guidelines on how to keep themselves safe throughout presentations. All of the following will be offered:**
    - Take breaks any time
    - Utilize pre-identified supports (school counselors, 24/7 help hotlines, other trusted adults). Supports in schools are counselors, social workers, "crisis team members" as deemed by schools trained in ASIST, MHFA, QPR, etc.

- **Facilitators, educators, or staff will remain attentive to signs that a participant may be struggling.**
    - Signs may include:
        - Statements about hopelessness, wanting to die, or feeling like a burden.
        - Abruptly leaving the presentation.

If a participant abruptly leaves the presentation or classroom, the facilitator will immediately notify the designated school staff member or crisis response contact. School personnel, following school policy, are responsible for locating and checking on the participant. If the facilitator must speak privately with a participant during programming, a co-facilitator, school staff member (e.g., teacher or designated substitute) will remain with the rest of the class whenever possible so that supervision of all students is maintained.

- Emotional distress, crying, withdrawal, agitation, or sudden changes in behavior.
- Written responses, conversations, or activities indicating suicidal ideation or self-harm.
- Reports from peers or other staff expressing concern.

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- **Facilitators will remind participants throughout programming that seeking help is a sign of strength and that support is available.**

invite

- **When a concern is identified, the facilitator will:**
    - Speak privately with the participant when possible.
    - Use calm, supportive, nonjudgmental language.
    - Ask directly and compassionately about safety concerns, including thoughts of suicide, when appropriate.
    - Listen without promising confidentiality and explain that additional support may be needed to keep the individual safe.

- **The facilitator will follow these steps for inviting a conversation:**
    - **Begin by telling the person what you've noticed.**
        - What is good and right? What is different?
        - Tell them specifically what they have said, done or written that concerns you using an 'I' statement:
            - "I've noticed that..."
            - "I heard you say…"
        - After initiating the conversation, give them a chance to open up and listen without judgement, and ask questions:
            - "I've noticed that you seem really (down, angry, quiet, etc.) lately. Do you want to talk about it?"
            - "You haven't been sitting with us at lunch lately. Are you okay?"
            - "Something seems to be bothering you. Do you want to talk about it?"

    - **Reassure them that you care and are worried.**
        - "I'm worried about you. Can you tell me what's going on?"
        - "I am concerned about you."

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        - "How long have you been feeling like this?"
        - "Have you spoken to anyone about this before?"
        - "Have you talked to anyone about how you are feeling?"
        - "It is hard for me to understand exactly what you are going through, but I can see that it is distressing you."

    - **Listen.**
        - It is okay to not have all the answers.
        - Embrace the awkward silence.
        - "Thank you so much for telling me."
        - "I am so glad that you shared this with me."
        - "I am not sure exactly what to do, but we can figure this out together."
        - "I want to help you figure this out."
        - "What would be the most helpful for you right now?"
        - "Is there anything or anyone that has helped you in the past?" If so, "What has helped in the past?"

    - **Be bold.**
        - "Are you feeling safe right now?"

challenge

- **Facilitators will challenge stigma and misconceptions:**
    - Reinforce that mental health concerns are common and treatable.
    - Encourage help-seeking behavior.
    - Emphasize that suicidal thoughts should always be taken seriously.
    - Avoid minimizing statements or attempts to solve the problem alone.
    - "Sometimes when people feel overwhelmed, they may think about hurting themselves or ending their life. Have you had thoughts like that?"

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- **Facilitators will ask the following questions if they identify that a participant may be experiencing a crisis:**
    - "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"
    - "Are you thinking about suicide?"
    - "Have you thought about how you would kill yourself?"
    - "Have you decided when?"

      *Higher level of planning means higher risk. This person may feel comfortable sharing this information, which you can then pass to a crisis team.

- **If the participant is in immediate danger:**
    - Examples:
        - States intent to die or harm themselves.
        - Has a plan, means, or recent suicide attempt.
        - Is unable to maintain their own safety.
        - The facilitator will stay with them and prioritize safety.
    - Keep yourself safe. If the person has a weapon or shows aggressive behavior, call 911 immediately.
    - Stay with the individual or ensure they are not left alone.
    - Notify designated school, workplace, or organizational crisis personnel according to local policies.
    - Document the concern and actions taken.
    - The facilitator to follow up with the school's point of contact within 24–48 hours to confirm that the student has been connected with appropriate school-based support (e.g., a counselor has been contacted, a parent/guardian has been notified per district policy, or a follow-up care plan has been established).

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- **How to Talk with Someone Who May Be Suicidal:**
    - Start with care and concern.
        - Let the person know you care and want to help.
        - Share specific things that you noticed and why you felt concerned enough to ask.
    - Listen without judgement.
        - Avoid negative or judgmental language.
        - Speak calmly and confidently—your presence can provide reassurance.
        - Understand that they may hesitate to involve family members or professional help.
    - Normalize help and offer hope.
        - Remind them that thoughts of suicide are more common than people realize and do not have to lead to action.
        - Do not try to argue someone out of suicide.
        - Reinforce that they are not alone and that help is available right away.
    - Involve them in the next steps.
        - Include the person in decision-making whenever possible and discuss what should happen next.
        - Ask who they feel comfortable telling.
        - Explore how to connect with professional support and offer to call together.

- **Facilitators will connect participant to Appropriate Supports**

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empower

- **If the participant is experiencing emotional distress but not immediate danger, the facilitator will:**
    - **Connect the individual with appropriate supports, such as:**
        - School counselor, social worker, psychologist, or administrator.
        - Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
        - Community mental health provider.
        - Primary care provider.
    - **Encourage use of crisis resources, including:**
        - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988)
        - 988lifeline.org
        - Local mobile crisis teams, when available.
    - Encourage the participant to identify trusted adults, family members, friends, or support persons.
    - Follow organizational reporting requirements and document the referral when appropriate.

Once a participant has been connected with the designated school mental health professional or crisis response staff member, **the facilitator will communicate the observed concerns and any information shared by the participant**. Responsibility for ongoing assessment, parent/guardian notification (when applicable), safety planning, and follow-up then transfers to the school's established crisis response process and designated personnel.

24/7 Crisis Resources

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
    - Call or text 988
    - Website: https://988lifeline.org
    - Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Emergency Services

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- Call 911 if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency.

Dedicated LGBTQ+ crisis resources:

- The Trevor Project
    - Available 24/7
    - Call **1-866-488-7386** or text **"START" to 678-678**.
- Trans Lifeline
    - Peer support run by and for trans individuals.
    - Call **(877) 565-8860**
- LGBT National Hotline
    - Peer-counseling, information, and local resource navigation.
    - Call **1-888-843-4564**

Summary - Roles and Responsibilities

- **be nice. Facilitators and Trainers**
    - Deliver programming according to established guidelines.
    - Monitor participants for signs of distress.
    - Respond using the **be nice.** action plan.
    - Connect participants with appropriate support resources.
    - Follow host organization policies and mandatory reporting requirements.
    - Document concerns and actions when applicable.

- **Host Organization (School, Workplace, Community Partner)**
    - Maintain emergency and mental health response procedures.
    - Identify designated personnel responsible for crisis response.
    - Provide access to counseling, Employee Assistance Programs, or community resources.
    - Ensure compliance with state laws and reporting requirements.

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- **Parents/Guardians (when participants are minors)**
    - Participate in safety planning when notified.
    - Assist with connecting youth to professional support and ongoing care.

Documentation and Follow-Up

- When concerns arise, facilitators should document:
    - Date and time of concern.
    - Observable behaviors or statements.
    - Actions taken and referrals made.
    - Individuals notified according to organizational policy.

Because **be nice.** programming is implemented in schools, workplaces, and community settings, facilitators will defer to and collaborate with the host organization's established crisis response procedures whenever available. The **be nice. action plan** serves as the framework for identifying concerns, initiating supportive conversations, challenging stigma, and empowering individuals to connect with professional help.

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Crisis and Suicide Response Flow Chart

be nice.
notice invite challenge empower

notice

Risk Factors & Warning Signs

invite

Start the Conversation

- Tell the individual what they have said, done or written that makes you concerned:
  - "I've noticed that..."
  - "You just said..."

challenge

Yourself to Ask the Question

- "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"
- "Are you thinking about suicide?"

If Yes

Crisis Situation

- Warm handoff to a school counselor or designated "crisis team monitor" (as deemed by schools trained in ASIST, MHFA, QPR, etc.) for a formal risk assessment

Get Help Immediately!

- Call 911. Tell the dispatcher that the person is at risk for suicide. Ask for a mental health crisis professional, if available.
- Bring them to a hospital
- Call 988
- Connect the person to appropriate professsional help

follow-up

- Follow up with individual 24-48 hours after (follow existing protocol, email to school counselor, etc.)

If No

Access Support Resources

- "Have you ever felt this way before?"
- "Was there anything that has helped you in the past?"
- "Are you feeling safe?"
- EAP/Counselors
- 988
- 741-741
- Primary Care Physician
- Support Groups

empower

Engage in Protective Factors & Coping Skills

- Access to services
- Utilizing services
- Involvement in activities
- Supportive people
- Good sleeping habits
- Meditation and mindfulness

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