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Key Points from Suicide Contagion Lecture

1. Learn the warning signs for suicide: <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs/>
2. Avoid passive language for talking about suicide diffusion
 - a. Avoid: “ripple effect” “contagion”
 - b. But do deal with the real problem which arises from youth identifying with the rationale for suicide that has been role modeled by peers, particularly peers they identify with or admire
3. Provide youth with clear factual information about suicide and helpseeking so that suicide does not become romanticized
 - a. Check out www.SPRC.org for evidenced based training programs to help you do this
4. If you are worried about a child, ask them direct questions about whether they are considering harming themselves. You may save their life. For more detailed advice please see <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/all-in-the-family/201401/what-do-when-someone-is-suicidal>
5. Make a plan for your family/school/clinic (etc) for how you will handle a suicidal youth or how you will react to support surviving youth in the event of a suicide death
 - a. Realize that youth beyond close friends may be deeply affected (like classmates) – its hard to predict
 - b. Make it easy for youth to seek help without peers finding out
 - c. Be creative: post information about how to seek help inside bathroom stalls so that youth can obtain the information privately
 - d. For more information, see <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/after-suicide-toolkit-schools>
6. Challenge mental health stigma: mental health problems are no different than other forms of medical problems
7. LISTEN TO YOUTH; take their comments about what makes their lives difficult seriously
8. I do not recommend forbidding your children from watching *13 Reasons Why*; I do suggest that you watch it and talk to them about it
 - a. Here are talking points: <https://save.org/13-reasons-why/>
9. Remember that suicide has social, psychological and biological roots; only through diverse prevention strategies can we stop national trends in suicide

References

Most of my research articles and essays are available for free on my website: www.annasmueller.com
If a particular article is not yet available for free, please email me and I will send you a copy.

Dr. Mueller’s Research (Selected):

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Dr. Mueller's Blogs on Related Topics:

2017. "13 Reasons Why and the Pressing Need for a Sociology of Suicide." June 28, 2017. *Contexts: Understanding People in their Social Worlds* Blog. (<https://contexts.org/blog/13-reasons-why/>)
2016. "Why Community Matters to Suicide: Examining the Social Roots of Adolescent Suicide Clusters." November 3, 2016. National Institute of Health's *Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) Connector*. (<https://obssr.od.nih.gov/why-community-matters-to-suicide-examining-the-social-roots-of-adolescent-suicide-clusters/>)
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2014. "Are Suicidal Behaviors Contagious in Adolescence?" *OpenPop.org: A collaborative blog on global population issues*. Published online December 3rd, 2014. (<http://www.openpop.org/?p=940>)

Evidence that Suicide Contagion is due to Social Influence (not Social Selection into Relationships)

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Also:

- Baller, Robert D. and Kelly K. Richardson. 2009. "The "Dark Side" of the Strength of Weak Ties: The Diffusion of Suicidal Thoughts." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 50:261-76.
- Fletcher, Jason M. 2017. "Gender-Specific Pathways of Peer Influence on Adolescent Suicidal Behaviors." *Socius* 3:2378023117729952. doi: 10.1177/2378023117729952.

Evidence that it is Safe to Talk about Suicide

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