

Talking About Suicide: A Guide to Language

At Suicide Prevention Australia, we frequently obtain feedback from people with lived experience of suicide about the inappropriate use of language when describing suicide. The way suicide is described and discussed is important as it is often stigmatising and can cause considerable distress.

We believe that it is time to help re-educate the community to use non-stigmatising language when discussing suicide.

To promote a positive shift in the terminology used to discuss suicide we recommend the short guide below.

✘ Stigmatising Terminology	✓ Appropriate Terminology
Committed suicide	Died by suicide
Successful suicide	Suicided
Completed suicided	Ended his/her life Took his/her own life
Failed attempt at suicide	Non-fatal attempt at suicides
Unsuccessful suicide	Attempt to end his/her life

Table taken from *Suicide and language: Why we shouldn't use the 'C' word*, by Susan Beaton, Dr Peter Forster and Dr Myf Maple. Published in *InPsych*, February 2013, and available online at <http://www.psychology.org.au/Content.aspx?ID=5048>.

Avoid description of the suicide

Members of the Lived Experience Network and the SPA Lived Experience Speakers Bureau have told us that hearing specifics about a method has caused them emotional pain and at times trauma, especially if the method or location is part of their own story. Additionally, detailing a description of a method and/or location of a suicide or a suicide attempt has been linked in some cases to further suicides using the same method or location.

For a more in-depth guide to discussing suicide visit ***Conversations Matter***, a practical online resource to support safe and effective community discussions about suicide at www.conversationsmatter.com.au.