

Use these tips and messages to spread the word about the *Seize the Awkward* campaign from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and The JED Foundation, in partnership with the Ad Council.

### KEY MESSAGES

- [76% of young adults](#) will turn to a peer for support in a time of crisis. Checking in on a friend's mental health, and listening without judgment, can make a big difference.
- The national *Seize the Awkward* campaign offers tips and resources to help teen and young adults start the conversation with friends who may be struggling with their mental health.
- For more information and resources to get the conversation started, visit [SeizetheAwkward.org](https://SeizetheAwkward.org) or follow [@SeizeTheAwkward](https://www.instagram.com/SeizeTheAwkward) on Instagram.

### ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS

- Your friend doesn't have to be struggling for you to start the conversation about mental health. Talking early and often with friends can create a safe space to open up and support each other.
- If you're in need of immediate support for yourself or a friend, you can reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by texting, chatting, or calling 988 at any time.
- [According to the CDC](#), the suicide rate among young people aged 15 to 24 rose 8% in 2021.
  - That's the largest rate increase among any age group, and represents an additional 354 lives lost.
  - Black youth and young adults experienced the largest rate increase (36.6%) in people aged 10-24.



The Jed Foundation



American  
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- Black and Hispanic communities in particular are experiencing the impact of discrimination and systemic racism on their mental health, so it's critical that teen and young adults within these communities are equipped with resources to start the conversation and seek help when it's needed.
- Your friend doesn't have to be struggling for you to start the conversation about mental health. Talking early and often with friends can create a safe space to open up and support each other.
- The *Seize the Awkward* campaign aims to equip all teens and young adults with accessible and relatable information to talk about mental health with friends, including how to spot warning signs that a friend is struggling, tips to start the conversation, and resources to get more help.
- Since its inception in January 2018, *Seize the Awkward* has been a trusted source of information for young adults across the country, driving over 3.1 million visits to the campaign's website and more than 60 million video views.
- The Seize the Awkward campaign is an award-winning initiative from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and The Jed Foundation (JED) in collaboration with the Ad Council. Since its inception in January 2018, it has been a trusted source of information for young adults across the country, driving over 3.1 million visits to the campaign's website and more than 60 million video views.

## SUGGESTED GUIDELINES & MESSAGING TIPS

- When a friend is going through a hard time, one of the most powerful things you can do is to **speak to your personal experience and encourage help-seeking resources or trusted adult.**
  - The best kind of stories to share times that you sought out help or did something to care for yourself and got through a hard time.
  - It's also helpful to share examples of how you've checked in on friends, and show that it doesn't have to be hard or feel awkward.
- While we acknowledge that starting a conversation can feel awkward, **avoid referring to people or the idea of having conversations about mental health as "awkward."**
- It's important that we normalize conversations about mental health and help-seeking behavior. When you're worried about someone or concerned that things are not getting better, **it's also okay to ask directly about suicide.**
  - It's also okay to **use the word "suicide"** in sharing personal stories of suicide loss or lived experience, as long as you talk about how things got better for you.

- It's a myth that talking about suicide can give someone ideas. Research shows that talking about suicide may help people feel more comfortable seeking help if they need it.

## SUGGESTED GUIDELINES & MESSAGING TIPS (CONTINUED)

- To help with suicide prevention efforts, experts recommend best practices in how we talk about it:
  - Say **“died by suicide,”** rather than “committed suicide” or “took their own life.” This shifts the focus to the person’s depression or other mental illness being the cause of their death, instead of blaming the individual.
  - **Avoid referring to a suicide attempt as “successful,”** because we don’t want to associate “success” with something so tragic. Instead, just say **“died by suicide.”**
  - Likewise, don’t describe a suicide attempt as “unsuccessful” – you can say someone **“survived a suicide attempt”** or, simply, **“attempted suicide.”**
  - If talking about someone’s suicide or suicide attempt, avoid going into details and describing how they went about it. We don’t want to risk triggering someone who may be struggling or creating a contagion effect.
- **Use “people-first” language.** For example:
  - Instead of saying “the mentally ill” or “mentally ill people,” say “people struggling with their mental health” or “people experiencing mental health challenges.”
  - Instead of “suicidal people,” say “people struggling with thoughts of suicide” or “people in crisis.”

## CRISIS RESOURCES

If you, your child, or someone you know needs help, refer to this list of [additional resources](#) or call the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at [988](#) for **24/7** free and confidential support.

For more messaging guides for different audiences, visit the [Ad Council’s Mental Health Toolkit](#).

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