

Thank you for participating in Suicide Prevention Awareness Month at UW-Madison by signing the StigmaFreeUW pledge.]

One in four U.S. adults will experience a mental health issue in their lifetime¹. Even though mental health issues are common, there's still stigma associated with having a mental health condition and seeking help. This pledge is one part of a broader UW-Madison effort to end stigma around mental health, promote help-seeking behaviors, prevent suicide, and create hope!

By signing, you agree to support campus efforts to better **understand** mental health, **challenge** misconceptions, **care** for one another, and replace stigma with **help and hope**.

Below are a three steps you can take to follow your pledge and support a StigmaFreeUW.

1) **Communicate in ways that reduce stigma, normalize treatment and support prevention.**

Normalize treatment and help-seeking.

When talking about mental health, emphasize that, at UW-Madison, seeking help is a sign of strength and maturity. We know that 94 percent of UW-Madison students do not think any less of a peer who seeks mental health care². Our student body is very supportive of mental health and treatment, overall. Continuing to talk about mental health and treatment in open and hopeful ways is one thing you can do to help UW-Madison become 100 percent stigma free!

Emphasize that suicide is preventable and treatment is proven to be effective.

In order to reduce stigma, we must shift the conversation about mental health and suicide toward a message of hope. At UW-Madison, support narratives about mental health that focus on building protective factors, collaborative prevention strategies, and the efficacy of mental health treatment. In fact, ninety percent of UW-Madison students who have used mental health care found it to be helpful³.

Be mindful of your language when talking about suicide.

Certain ways of talking about suicide can inadvertently contribute to it being presented as a glamorous, ideal or common option for dealing with problems. Below are language suggestions for talking about suicide. It's important to avoid judgmental phrases and remember that language can be misinterpreted or mean different things across cultures.

Do say	Don't say	Why?
'non-fatal' or 'made an attempt on his/her life'	'unsuccessful suicide'	So as to not normalize or glamorize a suicide attempt
'took their own life' or 'ended their own life'	'successful suicide' or 'completed suicide'	So as to not present suicide as a desired outcome
'died by suicide' or 'deaths by suicide'	'committed' or 'commit suicide'	So as to avoid the association between suicide and 'crime' or 'sin'
'concerning rates of suicide' or 'number of deaths'	'suicide epidemic'	To avoid sensationalism and inaccuracy

2) Learn about campus, local, and national resources available for yourself and others.

University Health Services (UHS) has suicide prevention information. We recommend checking out our [prevention](#) tips and the [resources](#) list.

3) Build your capacity to support others.

Understanding how to safely respond to students in distress is an evidence-based strategy for suicide prevention. UW-Madison offers opportunities for students and employees to learn how to recognize sign of distress, respond appropriately, and refer to resources. Students are especially crucial in this prevention strategy. At UW-Madison, most students would first talk to a friend or roommate if they were experiencing emotional distress⁴ and UHS is here to help equip members of our community to support others. UW-Madison students can access [At-Risk for Students](#), a 30-minute, free, online suicide prevention training. All members of the UW-Madison community can email suicideprevention@uhs.wisc.edu to learn about trainings, resources, and more.

[Learn more](#) about events, activities, and training opportunities related to Suicide Prevention Awareness Month at UW.

¹National Institute of Mental Health

^{2,3,4}Healthy Minds Study, 2016

Thank you for your support of suicide prevention and mental health promotion at UW-Madison!