

Language Guidelines

IASP Asia Pacific Regional Forum

Certain language can be problematic when discussing suicide. The language guide below provides some examples of problematic language and suggested safer alternatives. These language guidelines aim to reduce risk of harm while increasing awareness and understanding of suicide and its complexities.

Recommendations:

- Some words or language can be harmful: Avoid using the term 'commit' when referring to suicide, as the term's association with crime can be stigmatising.
- Minimise detail about method and location: Studies show that explicit or technical descriptions and images of methods or locations used for suicide have been linked to increased rates of suicide.
- Use language that is understandable and adapt language to suit audiences: To increase understanding, use non-judgemental and non-stigmatising language.
- Promote help-seeking: Add help-seeking information to stories about suicide, include 24/7 helplines.
- Use language that empowers and reflects people's lived and living experiences: Sharing stories of people with a lived or living experience can be powerful.
- Cultural considerations: Different cultures and communities have different ways of understanding, expressing and processing grief and suicide. Seek guidance from cultural or community organisations, Elders, faith leaders or trusted community members.

Problematic	Preferred
'Successful suicide', 'completed suicide' or 'committed suicide'	'Died by suicide' or 'took their own life'
'Unsuccessful suicide' or 'failed suicide bid'	'Suicide attempt' or 'attempted to end their life'
'Skyrocketing rates of suicide', 'suicide epidemic'	'Increased rates of suicide' or 'higher rates of suicide'
Labelling terms associated with suicide methods	'A person who attempted or died by suicide' or 'they died by suicide'
'Set free', 'finally at peace' or 'can rest at last'	'Tragic death' or 'a tragedy'
'Political suicide', 'suicide pass/ball' (in sports) or 'suicide mission'	Refraining from using suicide out of context
'Trigger warning' or 'triggered'	Content advice; 'the content includes discussion of suicide'

For more information and guidance, consult the [Mindframe Guidelines](#).

If in need of support, please visit the ['Find a Helpline' online tool](#).