The "S" word...talking about Suicide

Suicide

It's usually a conversation stopper, the word SUICIDE, striking fear amongst us which is often why we shy away from talking about it.

Innately we are programmed to protect ourselves from pain, and so we avoid, we change the subject.

This needs to change.

Suicide is the act of intentionally taking one's own life it is a preventable cause of death and an important issue for communities to engage with.

The **Suicide** Act of 1961 **decriminalised** the act of **suicide** in England and Wales. Prior to parliament passing this law, it was a viewed as a crime and anyone who attempted and failed could be prosecuted and imprisoned. The criminal associations with suicide might be gone, but sadly using the phrases commit and 'committed suicide' are still commonly used.

The "S" Word – talking about suicide

As we increase our knowledge and raise awareness about mental health and suicide, we have learnt to understand experiences of suicide ideation, behaviours and attempts. So, in our learned compassion, we avoid condemning their behaviours and use phrases such as "ended their life by suicide" or "died by suicide".

The most common misconception is the fear that talking about suicide will put the idea into someone's head – this is NOT true. In fact, talking about suicide can reduce the risk. If you ask someone if they have had suicidal thoughts and they say no, it shows that you are someone they can open up to without judgement.

If you are worried about someone, who you feel is showing signs of suicidal behaviours, trust your instinct. Always be clear and ask direct questions, remember - having a conversation with someone about their suicidal thoughts does not increase suicidal behaviour. Just knowing that someone is there to share their thoughts with can help reduce the overwhelming feelings.

Kelly's Heroes have a range of age appropriate talks to build confidence when talking about suicide. Talking about suicide requires courage, even for our trainers, professionals and counsellors, so we understand how difficult and scary it can feel.

Well being prepared to talk about suicide it's good to remember to :

- Focus on increasing knowledge and skills
- Choose words carefully
- Handle the discussion sensitively
- Encourage people to seek help
- Learn about other services and local support
- Know when to get professional help

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