

In *15-Minute Focus: Suicide: Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention*, Dr. Melisa Marsh gives school counselors and educators a primer on how to navigate the death of a student or staff member by suicide.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the second leading cause of death for individuals ages ten to thirty-four. This statistic underscores the impact suicide can have on our schools. It can shatter a school community and leave students and staff feeling helpless, angry, and confused. In this book, Marsh unpacks the stigma and data associated with suicide, and provides school counselors, educators, and administrators with ways to implement a suicide-safer community.

What you'll get:

- Specific language to use when talking about suicide
- Strategies for implementing suicide prevention, suicide intervention, and suicide postvention programs
- Research and data to help communicate risk factors
- Ways to support students in a virtual environment
- Over 20 pages of invaluable templates, including safety plans, email scripts, assessments, checklists, and more!

The death of a student or staff member by suicide is something no school wishes to navigate, but Marsh gives the tools needed to face these hard and challenging situations with understanding and hope.



Dr. Melisa Marsh currently serves as the Supervisor of School Counseling for the Cobb County school district in Marietta, GA, where

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Working alongside experts in various fields of mental health, the *15-Minute Focus* series is designed to hone in on a specific mental health topic, signs to look for, practical intervention and classroom management strategies, and effective ways to communicate and collaborate with internal staff, outside referrals, and student families.



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Introduction

Hope is a necessity for normal life and the major weapon against the suicide impulse.

—Karl A. Menninger

When you ask most people what they think about suicide or even suicide prevention, you will get a variety of responses—sad, scary, heartbreaking. While all of these thoughts and feelings are absolutely true, they all have a negative connotation associated with them. I have a different perspective that I would like to share related to the work we can do with suicide and suicide prevention.

I come from a place of hope. I am hopeful that we can make a difference. I am hopeful that we can save a life. I am hopeful that we can impact the stigma that is associated with suicide and mental health. As you read this book, I hope that you will keep this idea in mind. I, too, know that suicide is heartbreaking. I am only here after many of my own professional and personal experiences with suicide. But after all of the dust settles, I am still hopeful because I know that there are those who also care and who want to also keep others safe.

This book is designed to not only share the stigma and data associated with suicide, but also to provide you with an implementable plan to make your community safer. Therefore, I will provide you with specific language to use when speaking about suicide, strategies related to suicide prevention, strategies related to suicide intervention, and strategies related to suicide postvention. I will also provide you with strategies that can be used with your administration, with your teachers, and in a virtual environment. Finally, you will find a series of resources that you can modify and implement in your school setting.

This book is for you. The support person who worries if you have done enough. The support person who moves heaven and earth to support individuals with thoughts of suicide. The support person who keeps yourself composed all day and then breaks down at night because the work is so exhausting physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I see you. I have been you. Stay hopeful, my friend. You are not alone in the work that you do. And together we will make a difference.

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The Stigma

*What mental health needs is more sunlight,
more candor, more unashamed conversation.*

—Glenn Close

Suicide and suicidal ideation can be a complicated and heavy topic. Many schools and school districts are hesitant to directly discuss suicide with students for fear of associated stigma. I present all around the country on the topic of suicide prevention. I usually survey participants at the beginning of our time together to better know their needs so that our time together is meaningful. And I'll ask the following questions:

Does your district/school offer a suicide prevention program?

Does your district/school offer a suicide intervention program?

Does your district/school offer a suicide postvention program?

The data that I receive back from them is consistent across the country:

- About 48 percent of the participants respond that they do not have a suicide prevention program in place.
- About 44 percent of the participants respond that they do not have a suicide intervention program in place.
- About 59 percent respond that they do not have a suicide postvention program in place.

Suicide Protocol

