



Suicide Prevention Grade Seven

UNIT OVERVIEW

DURATION: 3 lessons (40 – 60 minutes per lesson)
Lesson 1 **The Truth About Suicide: De-Myth-Ifying It**
Lesson 2 **Risk And Protective Factors**
Lesson 3 **Messages From God**

DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this unit is suicide prevention. Some believe that studying such a topic will give people ideas. Research has shown that an educational awareness of suicide allows students to identify a peer at risk and intervene. In this sense, the unit can save a life. As well, students will have the awareness to realize that they are in trouble, and reach out for help from friends, family or school staff. As always, family life education is best when it is proactive, providing education before there is a problem, rather than after.

The Truth about Suicide: De-myth-ifying It –provides the opportunity for the students to be introduced to the concept of suicide. The students will learn what suicide is and will be exposed to some of the facts and myths that surround this sensitive topic.

SUICIDE: Risk and Protective Factors – allows students to investigate the concepts of resiliency, risk factors and protective factors and will learn the key risk factors contributing to suicide. Students will personally identify the protective factors that exist in their lives that contribute to their happiness and overall well being.

Messages from God – helps students to explore different passages from the Bible that reinforce that God is with them every step of their journey, even during their most difficult and trying times.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The topic of suicide is not addressed in Fully Alive or Ministry of Education curriculum. Although a taboo topic for many, suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst teenagers in Canada. A common misconception surrounding suicide is that discussing it will “put ideas into teenagers’ heads” and hence will lead to some teenagers making it happen. In reality, not talking about it leaves struggling teens confused and isolated. When discussing suicide with students, it is critical that they understand suicide is NOT a typical response to normal stresses in the lives of adolescents, nor is it the result of any one, single event. Rather, suicide is a manifestation of depression and distortions of thinking associated with a

psychiatric disorder. It is an irrational act in the face of an overwhelming experience of anxiety. It is the product of a complex interaction between many factors in life of a student at risk.

This Grade Seven unit starts conversation around this difficult subject based on the premise that any suicidal act is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Everyone goes through periods of feeling overwhelmed, hopeless and helpless. Adolescents need to understand that these difficult life experiences are only temporary, and that with appropriate supports in place, these challenges can be overcome in healthy ways.

The teaching of the Catholic Church provides necessary direction and contributes important information to our efforts to educate our youth on such a sensitive topic.

The Catholic Church teaches us that human life is sacred. The Catechism summarizes the teaching specific to suicide in paragraphs 2280 through 2283 as part of the overall teaching on the fifth commandment: Thou shalt not kill.

As people of faith, we recognize that “suicide is contrary to love for the living God.” (CCC #2281). It reminds us that life is a gift from God, who is the master of our lives. We are stewards "not owners" of our lives. Also, we believe that life is good.

Suicide is opposed to our instinct to self-preservation. It is also contrary to a just love of the self. It violates our obligation to love our neighbor, since any suicide inflicts great suffering on others, especially family members. No Catholic should ever encourage or assist suicide. We should always seek to preserve life if that is possible.

Students may share the experience of a family member or friend who has committed suicide. In this instance, the educator must be empathetic to the student’s situation and needs. The teacher can offer pastoral guidance derived from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“we should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives”. By ways known to God alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives (CCC #2283).

Journaling will be an important strategy to provide students with a more private avenue to express his or her thoughts and feelings regarding such a sensitive topic.

Classroom expectations need to be clear before commencing the unit. These would include attentive listening, optional oral responses, mutual respect and appreciation/no put downs. Students also need to be aware that if any of the conversations trigger the need to discuss personal issues, appropriate resources will be made available to them.

Should any disclosures arise in your classroom, it is essential that you advise your administrator immediately so that trained personnel in the mental health field can intervene as may be appropriate.

All questions or comments made on behalf of the students must be acknowledged to ensure that every student feels that they have been heard and validated. Opening the communication lines is critical to further intervention. For this reason, it is an absolute requirement that a **parent letter** is sent home with the students at least a week prior to this unit informing parents of the unit's content as well as the reminder that the school should be contacted with any concerns. In some cases, parents may ask for their students to be exempted from the unit; these wishes must be respected. It is imperative to note that this lesson serves solely as Suicide Awareness Curriculum. Research indicates that a curriculum approach designed to raise awareness about suicide contributes to significant improvements in student knowledge, particularly, how to seek help for oneself and others.¹

MINISTRY EXPECTATION CODES:

Lesson 1: The Truth About Suicide: De-myth-ifying It

The student will:

- deepen their understanding of the human person (Theme 1 – Created and Loved by God)
- distinguish between the facts and myths associated with suicide (NEW)

Lesson 2: Suicide: Risk Factors Protective Factors

The student will:

- will learn to decipher the difference between a Risk Factor and a Protective Factor (New)
- will be able to identify various risk factors and protective factors for suicide based on their new knowledge (New)

Lesson 3: Messages from Jesus

The student will:

- deepen their understanding of the human person
- be encouraged to explore their feelings about growing up
- identify sources of support with regard to issues related to feelings of despair and hopelessness

ASSESSMENT EVALUATION

This unit will use a variety of assessment methods for assessment purposes. Assessment strategies and tools that will be used in this unit include:

¹ Doan, J., Roggenaum, S., & Lazear, K. (2003). *Youth suicide prevention school-based guide – Issue brief 3b: Risk Factors: How can a school identify a student at risk.* Tampa, FL: Department of Child and Family Studies, Division of State and Local Support, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida.

Personal Communication – discussions (classroom and small group) as well as journaling opportunities on concepts introduced in lessons will be assessed

Performance Tasks – these tasks are designed to have students demonstrate their understanding of content material by applying their knowledge in activity sheets, group assignments, presentations and homework assignments

LINKS TO FULLY ALIVE AND HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Fully Alive: A potential entry point for these lessons is in Theme 1 during the discussions of the inherent dignity of each individual. The lessons on suicide might also fit following the lesson entitled Theme Five *Living in the World* lesson ‘We Support Each Other’.

Believe in Me: The lessons would also fit following Unit 9 of the Believe in Me program – *On the third day he rose. He ascended into heaven.* This unit focuses on understanding death and loss and looks at reactions to this process.

Supplementary Fully Alive Program: Another possible entry point would be following the new supplementary unit on stress or grieving. A potential consideration is to combine the Grade 7 and 8 units on Stress and teach it to the Grade 7’s in a block of lessons. Similarly, the Grade 7 and 8 units on Suicide and Suicide Prevention could be integrated into Grade 8 as a block of lessons. This will allow for the much needed separation between coping with stress and the subject of suicide viewed from a mental health perspective.

Consideration should be given to teaching this unit towards the later part of the year as the students will have developed a stronger sense of community and compassion for each other.

ONTARIO CATHOLIC GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community who

CGE1e -speaks the language of life... “recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it.” (Witnesses to Faith)

CGE1g -understands that one’s purpose or call in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life’s journey

An Effective Communicator who

CGE2a -listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values;

CGE2b -reads, understands and uses written materials effectively;

CGE2c -presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others

A Responsible Citizen who

CGE7d -promotes the sacredness of life

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCOMODATIONS

It is essential that any students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) have the specified modifications or accommodations put into place to ensure optimal learning and success. Potential accommodations that would assist a struggling student with this unit include:

assistive technology, such as text-to-speech software
 extended time
 extra time for processing
 graphic organizers
 highlight/chunk material
 scribing
 peer/buddy tutor
 repetition of information
 pre-teach unit vocabulary
 provide access to word bank

APPENDICES

Appendix One: The Truth About Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It
 Appendix Two: The Truth About Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It – Teacher’s Guide
 Appendix Three: Why Human Life Must be Respected
 Appendix Four: Handout / Note on Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide
 Appendix Five: List of Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide for Categorization
 Appendix Six: Teacher Answer Sheet – Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide
 Appendix Seven: Messages from God
 Appendix Eight: Prayer with Sentence starters

SOURCES

British Columbia Council for the Family (1992). *Let’s Live: A School Based Suicide Awareness and Intervention Program*.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY. THE TRUTH AND MEANING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY. Guidelines for Education within the Family. Vatican City, November 21, 1995

Christie, L., & Peterson, R. (1991). *When kids are touched by crisis*. Weston, Ontario: David C. Cook Publishing Co.

Doan, J., Roggenbaum, S., & Lazear, K. (2003). *Youth suicide prevention school-based guide – Issue brief 3b: Risk factors: How can a school identify a student at risk*. Tampa: FL: Department of Child and Family Studies, Division of State and Local Support, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida.

Ramsay, R. F., Tanney, B. L., Lang, W. A., Kinzel, T. (2004). *Suicide intervention handbook*. Calgary, Alberta: LivingWorks Education Inc.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

McDowell, J., & Stewart, E. (2000). *My friend is struggling with...Thoughts of Suicide*. Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publishing.

Henderson, N., Benard, B., & Sharp-Light, N. (1999). *Resiliency in action: Practical ideas for overcoming risks and building strengths in youths, families and communities*.

PUBLICATIONS

Garland, A., Shaffer, D., & Whittle, B. (1989). A national survey of school-based, adolescent suicide prevention programs. *Journal of the Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 28 (6), 931-934.

Greene, D. B. (1994). Childhood suicide and myths surrounding it. *Social Work*, 39 (2): 230 -232.

Grizenko, N. , & Pisher, C. (1992). Review of studies of risk and protective factors for psychopathology in children. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 37 (10), 711-721.

Kalafat, J., & Elias, M. (1994). An evaluation of a school-based suicide awareness intervention. *Suicide & Life Threatening Behaviour*, 24, (3), 224-233.

Ploeg, J., Ciliska, D., Dobbins, M., Hayward, S., Thomas, H., & Underwood, J. (1996). A systematic overview of adolescent suicide prevention programs. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 87 (5), 319-324.

WEBSITES

For Teacher Reference Only:

Canadian Mental Health Websites:

Canadian Mental Health Association: Ontario

http://www.ontario.cmha.ca/content/about_mental_illness/suicide.asp?cID=3965

Children's Mental Health Ontario

www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

Center for Suicide Prevention

<http://www.suicideinfo.ca>

Youth Suicide Prevention

<http://www.youthsuicide.ca>

American Sites

National Center for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/suifacts.htm>

National Youth Violence Prevention Program

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/suiciderisks.asp>

Suicide Reference Library

<http://www.suicidreferencelibrary.com/>

International Websites:

World Health Organization

http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/

Yellow Ribbon International Suicide Prevention Program

<http://www.yellowribbon.org/WarningSigns.html>

Church Sites:

Catechism of the Catholic Church

http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/ccc_toc/htm

Vatican

<http://www.vatican.va/>

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

<http://www.cccb.ca/>

Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops

<http://www.occb.on.ca/>

Suicide Prevention Grade 7

Lesson One

THE TRUTH ABOUT SUICIDE: DE-MYTH-IFYING IT

[top](#)

DESCRIPTION

This lesson will provide the opportunity for the students to be introduced to the concept of suicide. The students will learn what suicide is and will be exposed to some of the facts and statistics that surround this sensitive topic.

MATERIALS:

- Student copies of BLM 1 The Truth about Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It;
- Teacher copy of BLM Two: The Truth about Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It – Teacher’s Guide
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Religion notebook or writing journal for personal reflection.

NOTES TO TEACHERS

It is important to note that topics surrounding suicide are extremely sensitive in nature. For this reason, it is essential that the teacher ensures that the climate of the classroom is conducive to discussion surrounding such a sensitive topic. The classroom environment needs to be a safe place for each and every one of the students in your classroom; a place where each student feels completely respected and listened to as they enter into potentially vulnerable discussions. All questions or comments made on behalf of the students must be acknowledged to ensure that every student feels that they have been heard and validated. Opening the communication lines is critical to further intervention. For this reason, it is an absolute requirement that a letter is sent home with the students at least a week prior to this unit informing parents of the unit’s content as well as the reminder that the school should be contacted with any concerns. In some cases, parents may ask for their students to be exempted from the unit; these wishes must be respected. It is imperative to note that this lesson serves solely as Suicide Awareness Curriculum. Research indicates that a curriculum approach designed to raise awareness about suicide contributes to significant improvements in student knowledge gains, particularly, how to seek help for oneself and others.²

Journaling will be an important strategy of this unit as it will provide the student a more private avenue to express his or her thoughts and feelings regarding such a sensitive topic. Classroom expectations need to be clear before commencing the unit. These would include attentive listening, optional oral responses, mutual respect and appreciation/no put downs. Students also

² Doan, J., Roggenau, S., & Lazear, K. (2003). *Youth suicide prevention school-based guide – Issue brief 3b: Risk Factors: How can a school identify a student at risk.* Tampa, FL: Department of Child and Family Studies, Division of State and Local Support, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida.

need to be aware that if any of the conversations trigger the need to discuss personal issues, appropriate resources will be made available to them.

Should any disclosures arise in your classroom it is essential that you advise your administrator immediately so that trained personnel in the mental health field can intervene appropriately.

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS:

The student will:

- deepen their understanding of the human person (Theme One – Created and Loved by God)
- distinguish between the facts and myths associated with suicide (NEW)
- presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others (**CGE2c**)
- recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges (**CGE3a**)
- be a discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith community who speaks the language of life...”recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it” (**CGE1e**)

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

An initial True and False quiz will be distributed as a means to see what the student already knows as well as to serve as a non-threatening entry point into the topic. Communications through classroom discussion and personal journaling can be assessed.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

- 1) Distribute BLM 1: The Truth about Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It True or False Quiz to complete independently
- 2) Review each question on the True and False quiz will be reviewed and a classroom discussion will pursue surrounding the questions on the quiz. The Teacher will have a copy of BLM 2: Teacher’s Guide to lead classroom discussion.
- 3) Break students into small groups of 4-5
 - a) Students brainstorm ideas surrounding the topic of “Why Human Life Must be Respected”.
 - b) Students write ideas on chart paper and present to the class.
- 4) Following discussion, students will write the following brief note (see BLM 3) taken from the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church from the overhead. They can decorate the page with symbols that represent the sacredness of life to serve as a cover page for the unit:

The Fifth Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Kill

Why must human life be respected?

*Human life must be respected because it is sacred. From the beginning human life involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. It is not lawful for anyone directly to destroy an innocent human being, This is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator. Do not slay the innocent and the righteous” (Exodus 23:7)
(Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2005)*

- 5) Journal Entry – Students will respond to the following entries in their journal
 - What did you find most surprising about what you learned about the topic of suicide today?
 - Is there any unresolved issues that you have that were not addressed in the classroom conversation?
 - Describe in your own words, why you feel human life is sacred.

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BLM One: The Truth About Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It

BLM Two: The Truth About Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It – Teacher’s Guide

BLM Three: Why Human Life Must be Respected

The Truth about Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It

Read the following true and false questions and indicate whether you think the statement is True (T) or False (F).

- _____ 1. Suicide is defined as unintentional, self-inflicted death.
- _____ 2. A person who chooses to end their life does so because they see no other option to ending their pain.
- _____ 3. A true tragedy stemming from suicide is that many of these deaths could be prevented.
- _____ 4. Suicide is the leading cause of premature death in Canada.
- _____ 5. Females are four times more likely to die from suicide than males are.
- _____ 6. Mental disorders (particularly depression and substance abuse) are associated with 90% of all cases of suicide.
- _____ 7. Suicide is the fifth leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 24 in Canada.
- _____ 8. Many adolescents do not realize that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.
- _____ 9. An individual who has experienced suicidal thoughts can work through their issues and lead a happy and productive life.
- _____ 10. Suicide is always an impulsive and unpredictable act.
- _____ 11. Canadians are seven times more likely to die from being a victim of homicide than to die from suicide.
- _____ 12. Suicidal persons always want to die.
- _____ 13. In Canada, a suicidal teenager is equally likely to be from any socio-economic or cultural group.
- _____ 14. When one commits the act of suicide, one is breaking one of the Ten Commandments.
- _____ 15. The majority of suicides are caused by one single traumatic event.

BLM 2**The Truth about Suicide: De-Myth-ifying It**

Read the following true and false questions and indicate whether you think the statement is True (T) or False (F).

 F 1. Suicide is defined as unintentional, self-inflicted death.

*Suicide is defined as **intentional**, self-inflicted death. The issue of suicide encompasses not only death as a result of suicide, but also includes suicidal thoughts, threats, gestures, attempts and bereavement following a suicide*

 T 2. A person who chooses to end their life does so because they see no other option to ending their pain.

Experts in the field suggest that a suicidal person is experiencing so much pain that they often can see no other option than ending their life. They do not necessarily want to die, however, they want to escape their overwhelming feelings of pain. If they feel that they are no longer able to cope, or if their problems occur simultaneously with a mental illness, the individual may perceive death as the only way for the pain to stop.

 T 3. A true tragedy stemming from suicide is that many of these deaths could be prevented.

The truth is that attached to suicide is a stigma. As a result of this stigma, people tend to be silent on the subject of suicide and as a result, young people that require support or services (often mental health services) are prevented from seeking the help that they may need.

 T 4. Suicide is the leading cause of premature death in Canada.

Probably the most frustrating thing about this fact is that suicide can be prevented. Research has shown the importance of discussing the concept of suicide with young people as not talking about it will leave young people who are experiencing intense feelings that they don't understand increasingly isolated (Let's Live – School Based Suicide Awareness and Intervention Program, 1992).

 F 5. Females are four times more likely to die from suicide than males are.

The opposite is in fact true. In Canada and the United States, the ratio of male to female suicide is approximately 4:1. This ratio does not represent suicide attempts, as more females tend to attempt suicide; however, they do so less successfully. Males, on the other hand, tend to choose more violent means to end their lives (e.g. guns) which increases their suicide rate.

 T 6. Mental disorders (particularly depression and substance abuse) are associated with 90% of all cases of suicide.

This statement is true, however, it is important to note that often these suicides result from many complex socio-cultural factors and they are more likely to occur particularly during periods of financial, family and individual crisis situations (e.g. loss of a loved one, loss of employment, divorce), (World Health Organization, n.d).

__F__ 7. Suicide is the fifth leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 24 in Canada.

Suicide is in fact the second leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 24.

_____ 8. Many adolescents do not realize that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

The decision to end one's life is permanent – there is no turning back. Often times, the situations that are causing the individual such discomfort and pain will pass.

__T__ 9. An individual who has experienced suicidal thoughts can work through their issues and lead a happy and productive life.

With appropriate support, the individual who has attempted suicide can work on the process of healing him or herself. There are many individuals who were once suicidal

__F__ 10. Suicide is always an impulsive and unpredictable act.

The majority of individuals who are considering suicide usually hint to others or share warning signs that he/she is contemplating taking his/her life. Research shows that eight out of ten people, who die as a result of suicide, gave some or many indications of their plans. Such communication can be interpreted as 'an invitation for others to offer help'. These hints or signs can be communicated in a variety of ways including: direct threats or statements, physical signs, inappropriate emotional reactions or behavioural indications

__F__ 11. Canadians are seven times more likely to die from being a victim of homicide than to die from suicide.

Surprisingly, the opposite is true. Canadians are seven times more likely to die from suicide than to be the victim of homicide. A significant number of students are likely to answer this question incorrectly since media tends to focus so much on homicides.

__F__ 12. Suicidal persons always want to die.

In most cases, individuals contemplating suicide are unsure if they really want to die. They do know that they do not want to live with the tremendous amount of pain in their life. Most individuals are indirectly seeking assistance to avoid suicide, even if they are not conscious of the fact that they in fact want help. The majority of individuals who are suicidal at one stage of their lives, do find a way to continue living (Living Works Suicide Intervention Handbook, 2004).

- F 13. In Canada, a suicidal teenager is equally likely to be from any socio-economic or cultural group.

This statement is partially true. A Canadian suicidal teenager is equally likely to be from any socio-economic status group – however, with regards to cultural groups – research shows that suicide rates for Aboriginal youth younger than 20 are five times greater than that of all other Canadian youth.

- T 14. When one commits the act of suicide, one is breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

When one commits suicide, they are breaking the fifth commandment: Thou shall not kill. The catechism states that human life must be respected because it is sacred. From its beginning human life involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. It is not lawful for anyone to directly destroy an innocent human being. This is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 466).

- F 15. The majority of suicides are caused by one single traumatic event.

A sudden painful traumatic event may initiate a serious decision to die by suicide, however, it is unlikely to be sole cause. In most cases, there are other contributing factors, events and feelings that have built up over a prolonged period of time contributing to such a decision (Living Works Suicide Intervention Handbook, 2004).

The Fifth Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Kill

Why must human life be respected?

Human life must be respected because it is sacred. From the beginning human life involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. It is not lawful for anyone directly to destroy an innocent human being, This is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator. Do not slay the innocent and the righteous” (Exodus 23:7)

(Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2005)

Suicide Prevention Grade Seven

Lesson Two

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

[top](#)

DESCRIPTION

The concepts of resiliency and protective factors will be introduced and students will understand the integral role that these two factors play in suicide prevention.

Students will then identify the key risk factors contributing to suicide.

MATERIALS:

- Student copies of BLM 4 Handout on Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide
- Student copies of BLM 5 Suicide Risk and Protective Factor chart
- Religion notebook
- magazines,
- personal photos,
- construction paper and scissors / glue

NOTES TO TEACHERS: See note from Lesson One.

Understanding the risk factors of suicide and protective factors of suicide is a cornerstone to any suicide awareness curriculum. From a proactive standpoint, focusing on protective factors, such as effective coping strategies, social competence, social support within the home, school and community and decision making skills dramatically decreases the risk for adolescent suicide.³

Risk factors are explored in order that students are able to identify risk factors. It also is important that students learn to understand that there are resources and professional supports available in the community that would assist an individual in addressing these factors. The teacher cannot emphasize enough the fact that risk factors do not cause suicide. Many of the risk factors are associated with aspects of mental health. Research on suicide prevention awareness curriculum has shown that curriculum that focuses on suicide as it pertains to mental health is more beneficial to the learner. Such a focus has shown a reduction in suicide rates and an increased awareness about mental health, which may help students seek the professional help they need to work through such issues.¹

Should any disclosures arise in your classroom, it is essential that you advise your administrator immediately so that trained personnel in the mental health field can intervene as appropriate.

Doan, J., Roggenbaum, S., & Lazear, K. (2003). *Youth suicide prevention school-based guide – Issue brief 3b: Risk factors: How can a school identify a student at risk.* Tampa: FL: Department of Child and Family Studies, Division of State and Local Support, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida.

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

The student will:

- will learn to decipher the difference between a Risk Factor and a Protective Factor (New)
- will be able to identify various risk factors and protective factors for suicide based on their new knowledge (New)

CATHOLIC GRADUATION EXPECTATIONS

The student will

- read, understand and use written materials effectively (**CGE2b**)
- present information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others (**CGE2c**)
- recognize there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges (**CGE3a**)

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Students charts for sorting and classifying various factors that they would consider to be risk factors to suicide as well as factors that they would consider to be protective factors.
- Journal entry could all be assessed.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

- 1) Revisit – Before starting the new lesson for the day, it is important to revisit the first lesson as students may have questions or comments regarding the previous day’s lesson since they now have had time to better digest the material. This will also be a good time to give students the opportunity to take out their journal entries and share their responses if they wish to do so.
- 2) Brainstorming Session - As a class, the teacher will introduce the terms Resiliency, Protective Factors and Risk Factors. As a class, brainstorm the potential meanings of these terms.
- 3) Developing Understanding - Following the brainstorming session, students will either be given a copy of the definitions for Resiliency, Protective Factors and Risk for Suicide (Appendix 4) or definitions similar to those found on Appendix Four can be put up on board or overhead for students to review and copy.
- 4) Group Work: Students then will be provided with a copy of Appendix 5: Risk Factor or Protective Factor for Suicide? Students will work in small groups of 3-4 to classify and discuss whether each item is a risk factor of suicide or a protective factor.
- 5) Follow Up – The assignment will be taken up as a class and classroom discussion can ensue regarding why each factor would be considered such.

- 6) Journal Entry – Most of us are very blessed to have a number of protective factors in our lives that will be a source of support and comfort when experiencing stressful life events. Take an inventory of protective factors that exist in your life (e.g.. family, friends, your personality characteristics, etc.). Also, share the different personality characteristics that you have that you believe serve as protective factors for you. Explain how or why you feel these factors serve as protective factors for you in your life.
- 7) Collage – Students will demonstrate their knowledge of protective factors by taking an inventory of protective factors that exist in their lives (i.e. can include pictures of family, friends, school, interests, personality characteristics, etc.) and present these in an artistic format via a collage.

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BLM 4: Handout / Note on Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide

BLM 5: List of Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide for Categorization

BLM 6: Teacher Answer Sheet – Risk and Protective Factors of Suicide

Resiliency, Personal Protective and Risk Factors for Suicide: What exactly are they and what role do they play in suicide prevention?

The term resiliency is a popular term used in mental health research today. To better understand suicide and the prevention of suicide, it is important to be able to understand what resiliency is and be able to identify personal protective factors that promote resiliency in adolescents. These factors serve as protective factors for suicide. It is also important to be aware of and be able to identify potential risk factors of suicide.

Resiliency assumes that everyone has abilities, attitudes, and tendencies that help people survive, even thrive in stressful or adverse situations. It's a force that causes people to "rise to the occasion" and may have been playing a part in the old saying, "if at first you don't succeed, try and try again."

While some of these natural tendencies exist within us, many are developed and enhanced by exposure to healthy environments. In more and more research, resiliency is proving to impact young people in their ability to cope with difficult life situations.

Protective Factors

The positive personal tendencies and environmental conditions that support childhood and adolescent development are called protective factors. A protective factor is anything that decreases the likelihood that a behaviour/act will take place. For example, a protective factor of suicide reduces the likelihood that a person will be involved in suicidal behaviour. Protective factors enhance the ability of an individual to bounce back and may serve as a buffer to risk factors. Protective factors are quite varied and can include an individual's attitude, behavioral characteristics, environmental characteristics and cultural characteristics.

Risk Factors

A risk factor can be defined as anything that increases the likelihood that a behaviour/act will take place. For example, a risk factor of suicide is a factor that increases the likelihood that a person will be involved in suicidal behaviour. Risk factors are not necessarily the cause of suicide, however, they can alert others to the increased risk of suicide following a significant stressful life event or during the recurrence of a mental health disorder.

* Adapted from AADAC Parent Resources, and "Fostering Resiliency in Children and Youth: Four Basic Steps for Families, Educators and Other Caring Adults. By Nan Henderson, MSW., in Resiliency in Action: Practical Ideas for Overcoming Risks and Building Strengths in Youth, Families and Communities (1999). Nan Henderson, Bonnie Benard, and Nancy Sharp-Light, eds.

BLM 5

Risk Factors or Protective Factors of Suicide?

Factors	Risk Factor or Protective Factor	Why this would serve as a Risk Factor or Protective Factor
Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety		
Perfectionists and over-achievers who have high expectations of themselves		
Unwillingness to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental health and substance abuse disorders or suicidal thoughts		
Effective Coping Skills		
Loss of security...fear of authority, peers, group or gang members		
A feeling of connectedness to school or community		
Barriers to accessing health care, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment		
Lack of social support and sense of isolation		
Loss (social, relational or financial)		
The presence of a significant other in one's life (role model, partner, etc.)		
Problems with school or the law		
Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies		
Good physical and mental health		
A consistent sense of isolation and hopelessness		
An effective communicator		
Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self		

preservation		
Stressful situation or loss of a loved one		
Strong spiritual or religious faith		
Family history of mental disorders, substance abuse, or suicide		
Strong knowledge of and connection to community support		
Problem Solving Skills and Conflict Resolution Skills		
Early identification and appropriate treatment of psychiatric illness		
Previous Suicide Attempt		
Strong family support network		
Alcohol and substance abuse disorders		

BLM 6Risk Factors or Protective Factors of Suicide?

Factors	Risk or Protective Factor
Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety	Risk Factor
Perfectionists and over-achievers who have high expectations of themselves	Risk Factor
Unwillingness to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental health and substance abuse disorders or suicidal thoughts	Risk Factor
Effective Coping Skills	Protective Factor
Loss of security...fear of authority, peers, group or gang members	Risk Factor
A feeling of connectedness to school or community	Protective Factor
Barriers to accessing health care, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment	Risk Factor
Lack of social support and sense of isolation	Risk Factor
The presence of a significant other in one's life (role model, partner, etc.)	Protective Factor
Problems with school or the law	Risk Factor
Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies	Risk Factor
Good physical and mental health	Protective Factor
A consistent sense of isolation and hopelessness	Risk Factor
An effective communicator	Protective Factor
Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self preservation	Protective Factor
Stressful situation or loss of a loved one	Risk Factor
Strong spiritual or religious faith	Protective Factor
Strong knowledge of and connection to community support	Protective Factor
Problem Solving Skills and Conflict Resolution Skills	Protective Factor
Early identification and appropriate treatment of psychiatric illness	Protective Factor
Strong family support network	Protective Factor
Alcohol and substance abuse disorders	Risk Factor

Suicide Prevention Grade Seven

Lesson Three

MESSAGES FROM GOD

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DESCRIPTION: Messages from God – students will explore different passages from the Bible that reinforce to the student that God is with them every step of their journey, including during their most difficult and trying times.

MATERIALS:

- Bibles
- copies of BLM 7 ‘Messages from God’.
- Religion notebooks

NOTES TO TEACHERS:

Adolescence is a time when teenagers experience a great deal of change and confusion. It is important for adolescents to recognize and understand that they are never alone. Our Catholic faith instills in us the fact that God is forever there for us, even during our lowest and most confusing experiences.

The passages in this lesson reinforce the fact that life for all of us is difficult at times. With God’s everlasting love and guidance, however, we each will find the strength to face life’s challenges.

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS:

The student will:

- deepen their understanding of the human person
- be encouraged to explore their feelings about growing up
- identify sources of support with regard to issues related to feelings of despair and hopelessness

CATHOLIC GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

The student will:

- be a discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith community who actively reflects on God’s words as communicated through the Hebrew and Christian scriptures (CGE1c)
- be a discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith community who understands that one’s purpose or call in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life’s journey (CGE1g)

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- read and interpret the key message in three bible passages
- write a brief lesson that they would personally like to take away after reading each particular passage.

TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

- 1) Revisit – Before starting the new lesson for the day, it is important to revisit the second lesson as students may have questions or comments regarding some of the Risk/Protective Factors discussed in the previous day’s lesson. This also will be a good time to give students the opportunity to share their personal collages if they wish to do so.
- 2) Bible Study - As a class, the first passage will be read aloud together – Isaiah 30: 19-22. Discuss as a class the message that is being conveyed in this passage. As a class, fill in corresponding part of the chart. Then have each student write a short personal reflection of the lesson that they will take away from this passage. Have students wanting to share, share with the class
- 3) Think/Pair/Share groups – Have students get in pairs and read the final two Bible passages and have them complete the chart. Take up as a class.
- 4) Personal Prayer - Students will also be asked to write their own personal prayer, seeking God’s guidance and love during times of difficulty or confusion. Prayers could be typed up and decorated for display.

Black Line Masters

BLM 7 Messages from God

Messages from God

Scripture Passage	Key Message Conveyed in Passage	A Personal Message for Me (Lesson I will take with me from passage)
Isaiah 30: 19-22		
Psalm 103: 1-18		
Luke 12:22-26		

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