Understanding changes everything

The actual stigma, and how we end it

People are talking about mental health and suicide more than ever, yet the stigma remains. It isn't how often we talk about it. It's how we talk about it.

1 **Shame is the result of the stigma**

Most people believe the stigma is shame. Shame is what people feel *because* of the stigma.

2 **The actual stigma is a belief**

It's the belief that someone facing mental health challenges, or who has attempted or died from suicide, is weak, selfish, bad or broken, and above all, that it was a **choice**.

3 **No one chooses a mental health crisis**

Healthy people do not choose to die. Suicide is the result of dire circumstances, where a person couldn't see any other way through their pain.

How we end it

- **Understand** what the stigma really is.
- **Notice** the difference between stigmatic and intentional language.
- **Practice** intentional language until it feels natural.

> *When in doubt, talk about suicide the same way you would talk about cancer.*

Try this

Think of a phrase you've heard about mental health or suicide this week. Does it suggest weakness, selfishness or choice? How could you say it with more understanding?

INSTEAD OF	TRY
He committed suicide.	**He died from suicide.**
She chose to die.	**I lost her to suicide.**

Need help now? If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 988 (US) or text HOME to 741741. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

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