

# Community Education Series

The Recovery Village and Advanced Recovery Systems





**Presentation Topic:**  
Ask a Question Save a Life

**Speaker:**  
Michael Crisanto, MA



# About the Speaker:

Michael Crisanto

MA



- Before joining Advanced Recovery Systems in 2020, Michael spent over 10 years working in many capacities and settings of Behavioral Health, including outpatient counseling, forensics, Medication Assisted Treatment, and case management. He has his Master of Clinical Psychology from the University of Central Florida and completed his undergraduate work at the University of Florida. Most recently, Michael has worked as a Suicide Prevention Specialist, partnering with different Behavioral Health Organizations, hospital systems, schools, and agencies to implement best-practice guidelines and provide evidence-based trainings in suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. He is driven by his passion to help others and is excited for the opportunity to share his knowledge and experience with the Advanced Recovery Systems team and surrounding areas.

# SUICIDE IN THE U.S.

- **48,344 completed** suicides in 2018
- About one person every 10.8 minutes
- About 134 people per day
- 3 female attempts for each male attempt
- 3.5 male deaths for each female death
- 10th ranking cause of death in the U.S., Homicide is 16th
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death amongst youth aged 15-24.
- Florida in Comparison to the US
- The suicide death rate in the US is 14.2
- Florida ranks 29th behind states like Montana, Alaska, Colorado, Arizona, Oklahoma, West Virginia and Tennessee

# Why Do People Hesitate to Intervene?

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- Not sure about how severe the risk is – what if they are wrong?
- Worry about doing/saying the “right” thing
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Afraid to put the idea in someone’s head
- Feel it’s not “their issue”
- Bystander Effect

The slide features four teal decorative circles: a partial circle in the top-left, a partial circle in the top-right, a partial circle in the bottom-left, and a solid circle in the bottom-right.

# **What Are the Reasons People Hesitate to Ask for Help?**

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- Unwilling to admit needing help
- Afraid to upset/anger others
- Unable to describe their feelings/needs
- Unsure of available help or resources
- Struggling with symptoms of depression
- Don't know what to expect
- Shame, fear of stigma



# Our Words Reflect Our Beliefs?

Often hear the word “commit”

Simply use...

- “suicide”
- “died by/of suicide”
- “suicide attempt”

# JOINER'S THEORY OF SUICIDE



SOURCE: KIMBERLY A. VAN ORDEN ET AL., "THE INTERPERSONAL THEORY OF SUICIDE," PSYCHOL REV. 117(2) (2010): 575

# Risk Factors and Warning Signs

- RISK FACTORS

- Increase risk in general, but does not mean risk is imminent.
- Tend to be situational (Loss is a common theme)

- WARNING SIGNS

- Specific changes in behavior
- Risk is imminent and intervention is necessary



Risk factors vs warning signs of a heart disease as an analogy

# Common Risk Factors of Suicide

- Being expelled from school or fired from job
- Family problems/alienation
- Loss of any major relationship
- Death of a friend or family member, especially if by suicide
- Diagnosis of a serious or terminal illness
- Financial problems (either their own or within the family)
- Sudden loss of freedom or fear of punishment
- Feeling embarrassed or humiliated in front of peers
- Victim of assault or bullying

# Common Warning Signs of Suicide

- Current talk of suicide/making a plan
- Feeling trapped with no way out
- Withdrawing from friends, family and society
- Anger, irritability, engaging in high risk behavior apparently without thinking
- Statements of hopelessness and despair
- Acquiring a gun or stockpiling pills
- Impulsivity/increased risk taking
- Giving away prized possessions
- Sudden interest or disinterest in religion
- Self-destructive acts (i.e., cutting)

# Verbal Warning Signs

## Direct Verbal Warning Signs

- “I wish I were dead.”
- “I’m going to commit suicide.”
- “I’m going to end it all.”

## Indirect Verbal Warning Signs

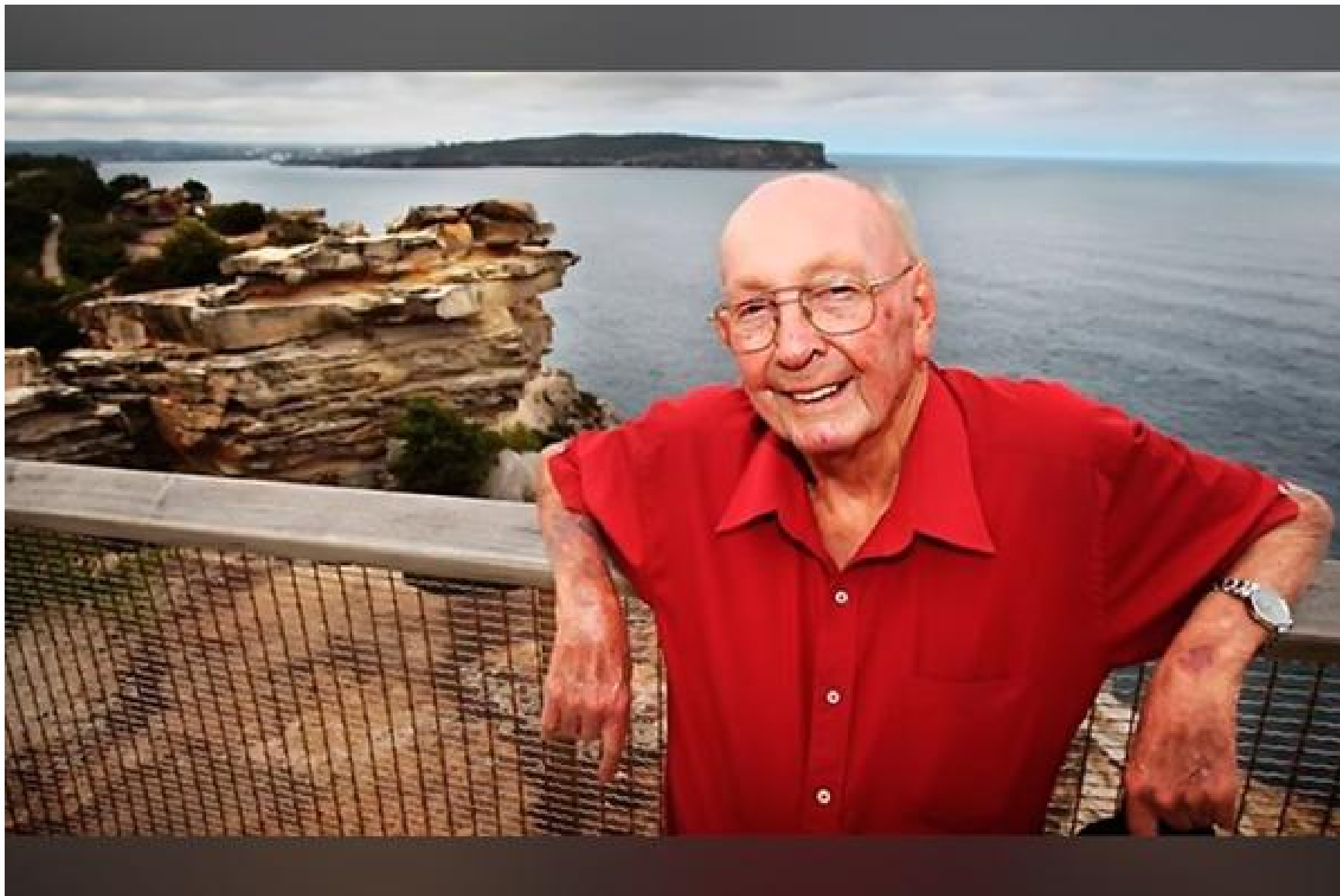
- “I’m tired of life, I just can’t go on.”
- “My family would be better off without me.”
- “Who cares if I’m dead anyway.”
- “I just want out.”



# How Are You Doing?

# Don Ritchie

“The Angel of the Gap”





# Asking the Suicide Question

## Acknowledge

- Be present. Acknowledge the person by actively listening
- Eye contact, posture, gestures, verbal nods
- Recognize that their problem, concerns, issues, crises are *real* to the person who is thinking about suicide

## Listen

- Offer empathy rather than try to 'fix' the problem
- Allow the person to talk freely

## Invest

Be in the moment and take the time to listen and process feelings, emotions, behaviors, and actions

## Validate

Don't minimize their pain

## Engage

Ask clearly and directly "Are you thinking about suicide?" or "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

# Tips for Asking the Suicide Question

1. Show that you care and that you're concerned
2. Justify why you are asking the question
3. Ask the suicide question directly and confidently.

# How *Not* to Ask the Suicide Question

- “You’re not suicidal, are you?”
- “You wouldn’t do something stupid, would you?”
- “Suicide is a dumb idea, you’re not thinking about killing yourself, are you?”

# Getting the Person to Safety

- When in doubt, get help from outside sources
  - Seek immediate help if the threat to kill oneself is imminent
  - Seek help if you feel you cannot resolve the issue or need advice
  - Call 9-1-1. Request CIT officer when possible
- When seeking help from outside sources, keep in mind:
  - Don't be embarrassed to seek help, if needed
  - Recognize mental health is an important part of overall wellness just as it's important to go to the doctor for an eye exam or yearly physical
  - Mental illness is a treatable condition
  - Suicide is preventable
  - Know that you are not alone
  - Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline any time, day or night
  - Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

# SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES

-  **Visit**  
Your Primary Care Provider  
Psychiatric Hospital  
Walk-in Clinic  
Emergency Department  
Urgent Care Center
-  **Find a mental health provider**  
[findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)  
[mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help)
-  **Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
Veterans: Press 1
-  **Text TALK to 741741**  
Text with a trained crisis counselor  
from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7
-  **CrisisChat.org**
-  **Call 911 for emergencies**

Be a lifesaver.

Learn how you can stop suicide at [afsp.org](http://afsp.org).

# Spread Kindness

- Send a simple text to check how a friend is doing
- Start a conversation with someone
- Give a smile to a stranger or service staff
- Give a hug
- Give a genuine compliment to someone who did good work
- Give someone a call to say hi
- Lend a helping hand to someone who has a problem. For example, if you have a friend who is trying to find a job, see if they need help with their resume, or if they need pointers on job search. Or if you know someone who just went through a breakup, see if they need a listening ear or want to hang out.
- Send a thank-you note to someone who made a difference in your life
- Give a tip to someone who gave great service

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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**THANK YOU**

