

Sharing Your Story With the Media

Ami Neiberger-Miller, APR
Public Affairs Officer, TAPS



What We Want to Talk About Today

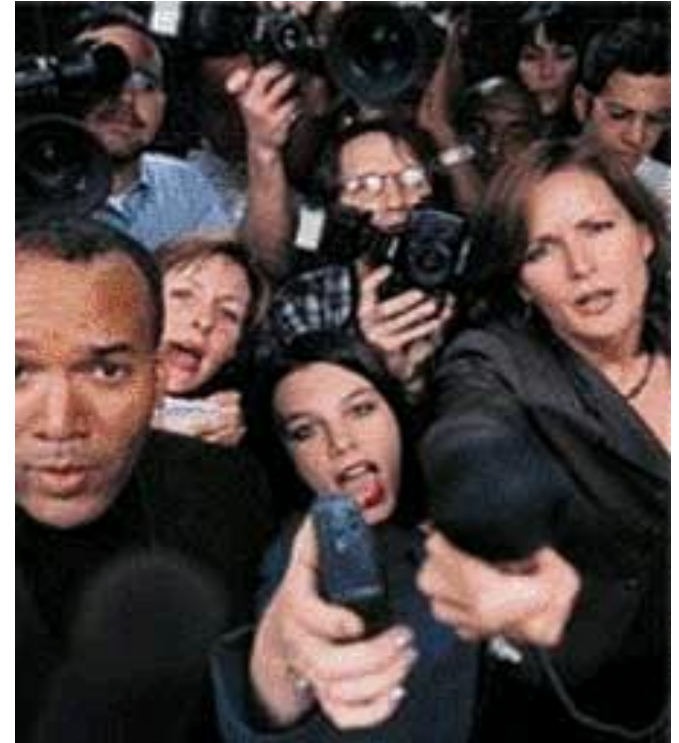
- Understand who the media are
- Media coverage and suicide
- Determining “Are You Ready?”
- Sharing your story
- Talking about suicide
- Resources

Who are the media



Media coverage and suicide

- Can be exploitative
- Can hurt you and your family
- Sensationalistic coverage can cause a rise in suicide rates
- Language used in media reports and by survivors influences how others view suicide and prevention efforts.



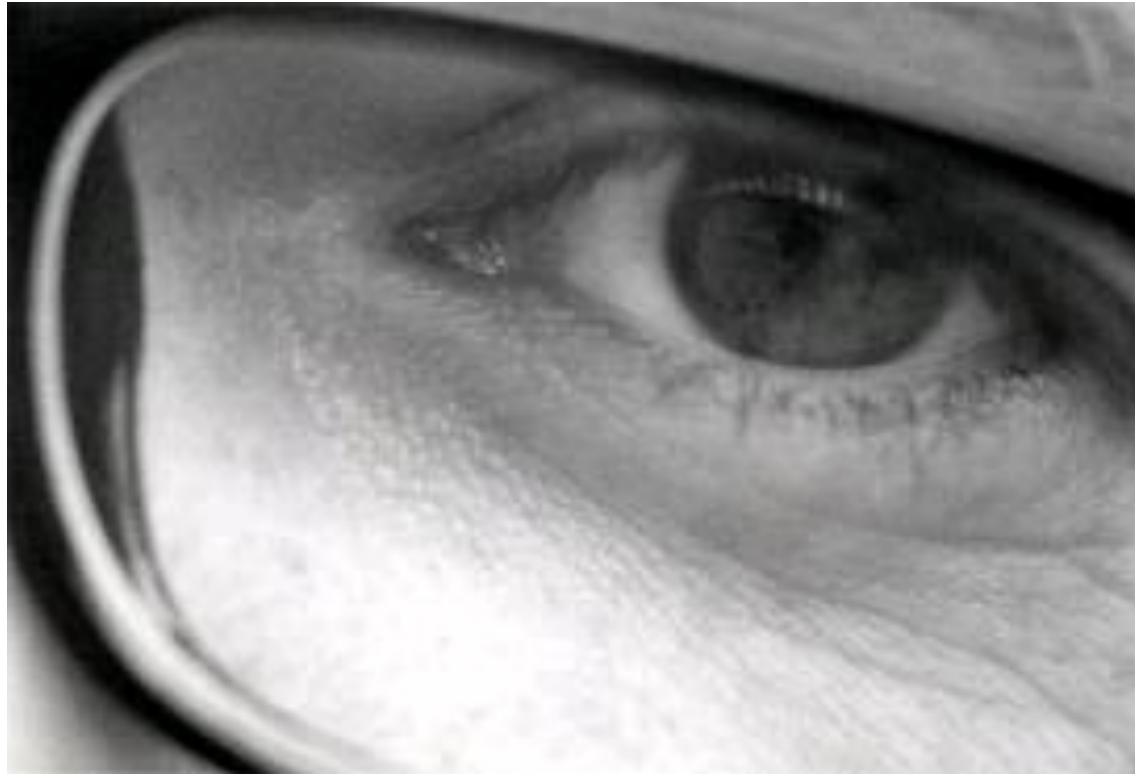
Determining “Are You Ready?”

- Is now the right time?
- What impact will public sharing have on my family?
- How will I feel if others outside our family “know”?
- Can I handle how others might respond?
- Can I live with the fact that this may be on the Internet for the rest of my life?



Sharing your story

Your experience is like the lenses on a pair of glasses. It is a tool that you can use to help others better understand.



Sharing your story



You can structure your story to provide helpful information that advocates for awareness, change, and saves lives.

Sharing your story

- What warning signs did I see with my loved one, that might help other families or friends seek help for someone in crisis?
- What have I learned since my loved one died, that I wish I had noticed earlier?
- Where could the system/society/the military be changed or fixed? (not just one person, the system)



Outlining Your Story

- **Section 1– My relationship with my loved one**
describe positive qualities of my loved one, things we liked to do together, How we met/how long in relationship (for spouses), number of children, give a sense of family life. 1-2 paragraphs
- **Section 2 - My loved one – the bare basics**
Name, age, rank, hometown, when he/she joined the military, why he/she joined the military, what his/her jobs were in the military. 1-2 paragraphs
- **Section 3 – Something was wrong**
Symptoms my loved one exhibited that pointed to suicide that I may or may not have noticed at the time. 1-5 paragraphs

Outlining Your Story

- **Section 4 – When my loved one died**

Do not go into details about the method used unless asked – just say – “He died by suicide on XYZ date. 1 paragraph

- **Section 5 – My journey since**

How my loved one’s death has impacted me and my family. What you have learned personally. 1-3 paragraphs

Outlining Your Story

- **Section 6 – What I want others to know (signs) and I want to encourage others in trouble to get help**

I want for others to know the warning signs of suicide. Mention again briefly some of the symptoms you described that your loved one exhibited. Encourage others to get help now. Mention 1-3 paragraphs

- **Section 7 – Applying What I've Learned, Beyond Me to Advocate for Change, Improve Military/System/Society**

Where could the system/society/the military improve to prevent the suicide of your loved one? What changes/improvements could be made that might help someone else? 1-3 paragraphs

Talking about suicide

- **Died by suicide**
INSTEAD OF “committed suicide”
- **Non-fatal suicide attempt**
INSTEAD OF “successful suicide” or “unsuccessful suicide attempt”
- **Post-traumatic stress**
INSTEAD OF “post-traumatic stress disorder”
- **Survivor**
INSTEAD OF victim
- **Method of death, excessive details about the death**
research shows that often graphic descriptions of how someone died by suicide encourages other suicides

Resources

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
About suicide, For the media
www.afsp.org
- Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma
guidelines on interviewing trauma survivors
covering suicide resources
www.dartcenter.org
- TAPS
NEWS/MEDIA, Pressroom
www.taps.org
- National Vet Center Crisis Line
1.800.273.TALK

Ami Neiberger-Miller, 202.588.8277, ami@taps.org