

There Can Be Light
Educator
COMPANION GUIDE

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Mental health education for a new generation

FROM THE PRODUCER

Dear Educators,

Glowmedia films are intended to destigmatize challenges that can make teens feel isolated and worry that they are different from their peers. When the adolescents in the films struggle, students viewing the films will feel less alone, less stigmatized by their own issues. The teens in the film model what it is like to confide in friends about a problem, and to seek advice from a parent/guardian, a coach, or a school counselor. Our films emphasize the importance of getting support and learning coping strategies. Through our educational series, schools can present our films and start discussions, raising the chances that young people will feel valued and empowered despite the challenges they face.

There Can Be Light aims to reach students on their level. With contemporary music and modern situations, the film emphasizes that help is always available, and that recovery is possible. Mental health is something that can be managed, just like physical health. Suicide is preventable. Let people know they are not alone.

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among young people at the time this curriculum guide was written. Faculty are strongly urged to be attentive to the mood and tone of individual students and the group, as well as to your own responses. We encourage you to trust your instincts during the lessons as you will know your students best.

Students watching *There Can Be Light* Students will be made aware of the following:

- Statistics about teen suicide
- Possible warning signs of suicide
- Protective factors
- How to get help if you are thinking about suicide
- How to intervene if you think a friend or relative may be thinking about suicide.

This guide includes preparatory and resource materials for before, during, and after viewing the film. A synopsis of the film is included for your use. As part of your school's Health curriculum, the film should, ideally, be viewed in two 45-min. class periods. The lesson plan adheres to Common Core Standards as well as ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success. To achieve the greatest benefits from the film, the information in the Parent/Guardian Companion Guide should be sent to parents/guardians along with a letter about the screening of the film so that discussion may continue in the home in addition to the classroom.

Sincerely,

Trish Glowacki
Executive Director, the glowmedia project
Executive Producer, ***There Can Be Light***
Publish Date, May 11, 2024

EPISODE SYNOPSIS

How do you heal from a loss? 15-year-old Olivia lost her childhood best friend, Ricardo, to suicide and is grappling with guilt. He texted her and she didn't see the signs. Falling into depression, she must find a way to move forward by honoring Ricardo's pain, her surviving relationships, and her own humanity.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Grade Levels: Secondary 6-12

Lesson Duration: To be completed over two to four 45-minute class periods depending on how many lessons are utilized.

IMPACT OF SUICIDE ON COMMUNITY

Standards:

<p>COMMON CORE STANDARDS</p>	<p>English Language Arts Standards Speaking and Listening</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.(6.1/7.1/8.1) Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade (6,7, or 8) topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.D Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.(9-10.1/11-12.1) Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades (9-10/11-12) topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and</p>
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		<p>understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.</p>
ASCA MINDSETS & BEHAVIORS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS	K-12 College and Career- Readiness Standards for Every Student Category 1: Mindset Standards	<p>School counselors encourage the Following mindsets for all students:</p> <p>M 1. Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being M2. Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment</p>
ASCA MINDSETS & BEHAVIORS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS	K-12 College and Career- Readiness Standards for Every Student Category 2: Behavior Standards	<p>B-SS 2. Positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them B-SS 4. Empathy B-SS 5 Ethical decision making and social responsibility B-SS 8. Advocacy skills for self and others and ability to assert self, when necessary B-SS 9. Social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment</p>

Objective:

Students will be able to understand and identify certain signs and risk factors for suicide as well as discuss and reflect on the impact suicide can have on a community and how to support someone who might be struggling.

Essential Questions:

1. How can you support someone you think might be at risk of attempting suicide?
2. How can you help someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one by suicide?
3. Why is it important to share mental health concerns or feelings of distress with those you trust?

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among young people at the time this curriculum guide was written. Faculty are strongly urged to be attentive to the mood and tone of individual students and the group, as well as to your own responses. We encourage you to trust your instincts during the lessons as you will know your students best.

To that end, we have included a range of activities and guiding questions for you to utilize based on what you think will be the most effective for your class. While the questions and lessons are in a recommended order to help guide students through their thinking and processing, some groups of students may find it useful to complete the activities in a different order or skip elements completely.

Launching the Lesson

- Review some of the data included at the end of this lesson plan so you are familiar with the resources.
 - There is an activity listed for students to do their own research, but of course you can share the resources with students in advance if you prefer or if time is short.
- Watch *There Can Be Light* film
 - NOTE: We recommend you show the film two times. The second viewing can take place on the same day or on another day, but students should be encouraged to take notes on what they hear, what they notice about the characters, what questions they have, etc. when watching a second time in order to be better prepared for discussions and extension activities.
- Pose 1 or 2 of the guiding questions to gauge student response and determine which questions/activities will suit your particular group of students best.
- Complete guiding questions and extension activities as class time will allow.
- Wrap up with a reflection either verbal or written:
 - How did the film and/or the questions help you to think more deeply about teen suicide and mental health?
 - Which question or scene in the film did you find most helpful or compelling and why?
 - Has anything changed about the way you think about the teen suicide and mental health?
 - Which group activity was the most useful and/or engaging for you?
 - What is your biggest takeaway from this experience?

Guiding Questions:

1. A student's suicide affects the whole community, even those who don't know the student well.
 - a. In this film, who do we see being most affected by Ricardo's suicide?
 - b. Who else at school is affected?
 - c. Who else was in Ricardo's life outside school who might also be affected?
 - d. What about people in the lives of Ricardo's classmates who will learn of and react to the suicide?

2. At the beginning of the film, Maria has brought Olivia to the football game even though it's only been a couple of days since Ricardo died. Do you think the football game should still have taken place? Why or why not? Why do you think Maria thought going to the football game might be helpful to Olivia? Why do you think Olivia didn't respond well to the football game?

3. How do the three main characters in the film – Olivia, Maria and Jason – each react to Ricardo's suicide? Please point to specific behaviors or comments you observed. Normal reactions to a student's suicide among peers and staff can include
 - Shock
 - Disbelief
 - Numbness
 - Trauma
 - Grief
 - Anger
 - Guilt (see #3 below)
 - Thinking about death and/or suicide themselves (see #4 below)

4. In the Ouija board scene in the library, the characters' different reactions lead to a temporary falling out between them.
 - a. How might the characters have handled this interaction differently to show support for one other?
 - b. At the end of the film, Olivia and Maria come together in mutual support, and we see Olivia and Jason coming to an understanding. What leads to these more positive interactions?

5. What impact did Olivia's sister have on her in the scene when she sits with her on the couch?
 - a. Why was what Olivia's sister said impactful?

6. If you're concerned about a friend or loved one, what kinds of things could you say to them? When should you ask for help?
(NOTE: This question should utilize the "How to intervene if you think a friend or relative may be thinking about suicide" section in the resources included at the end of this packet.)
7. Why do you think suicide is so difficult to talk about?
 - a. What can we do to better support each other in these conversations that need to be had?
 - b. Why do you think it's important to talk about suicide prevention?
8. Guilt is very common after a friend or family member's suicide. Students should discuss reasons why people in a community might feel guilty after a suicide, and use examples from the film
 - a. Examples of reasons people feel guilty:
 - i. Not knowing the person who died was depressed and/or needed help.
 - ii. Thinking about things they said or did that might have negatively affected that person
 - iii. Wishing they could have done something to change the outcome.
 - b. What are some strategies or resources that could be used to work through these feelings of guilt?
9. Even though suicide can't always be prevented, it is always worth trying what is called "psychological first aid" while you try to get expert help for someone you think may be considering suicide.
 - a. Just as we are taught CPR and other kinds of emergency interventions if we see someone in crisis or physical danger, what steps can you take in order to provide as much support as possible to someone in a mental health crisis?
10. Statistics show that suicide attempts are more likely to occur in a community after there has been a recent suicide in that community. What are some possible reasons this might happen?
 - a. People blaming themselves for not having done something to save their friend or family member may feel they don't deserve to live either.
 - b. A wish to "join" the person who died if they miss that person.
 - c. Someone already feeling depressed or isolated might see the person who died as a role model, and be drawn to imitate that person's actions.
 - d. If someone sees the person who died by suicide being glorified, they might imagine that if they died, too, everyone would respect and pay attention to them.

In this film, what do you think leads Olivia to think about dying herself?

11. Olivia organizes the memorial for Ricardo to raise suicide awareness at the end of the film. Why do you think memorials for those who die by suicide often focus on raising mental health awareness, support, funding and research?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. **Circles of Community:** *Students will use visual aids to articulate the far-reaching impact individuals can have on a community as well as on other individuals.*
(Materials needed, large board or chart paper, writing utensils, lots of sticky notes- 2 colors)
 - a. Ask students to define “Circles of Community”. If they struggle, a basic definition is “a group of people who you know or who know you.”
 - b. Once you have the definition, identify 5-6 circles that the students can relate to. Examples include: Family, Friends, Teachers/Coaches/Mentors, School, Community Organizations (including religious organizations), City/Town. *(NOTE: You can use or adapt these examples as a starting place if you’re short on time. Also, if you have large chart paper, you can make more than one copy and students can work in small groups and then come back together later with observations)*
 - c. On the board or on a large piece of paper, draw concentric circles *(Start by drawing the largest circle so you don’t run out of room.)* Label each circle with one of your community labels. Put the closest group to you in the smallest circle and build out from there.
 - d. Each student should take some sticky notes do the following:
 - i. Sticky Note Color 1: Write down one person or group name and how they have had impact on others within the circle and place on the appropriate point on the chart.
 1. Example: Mom – I make dinner when she’s working late.
 2. Example: Soccer Team – I always show up and cheer on my teammates.
 - ii. Sticky Note Color 2: Write down one person or group name how they have been impacted by others within the circle and place on the appropriate point on the chart.
 1. Example: (teacher name) Always helps me with my work when I’m stuck.
 2. Example: (friend name) sends me notes/memes to make me laugh.
 - iii. **It’s okay if some circles have more of one color than another.*
 - e. Once everyone has had time to add things to the chart, have students take a look at what was written.
 - f. Discuss what they notice. Below are some question suggestions to guide the discussion:
 - i. What do you observe about the notes?
 - ii. Are they big actions or little actions? Does it vary based on the circle of community?
 - iii. Is one color more dominant than another? If so, why do you think that is?
 - iv. Are communities rooted by in-person interaction or online interaction?

- v. Where do students feel they have the most influence and are the most influenced?
- vi. How does the idea of impact relate to suicide and suicide prevention?
- vii. Which circles are most important to you and where you would likely turn if you needed support? Why?

2. **Research:** *Students will be able to understand and identify warning signs for suicide and ways to support a person in crisis.*

- a. Step 1: Have students individually answer the following list of questions:
 - i. What should you do if someone tells you they are thinking about suicide?
 - ii. Is it possible to predict suicide?
 - iii. What are possible warning signs about suicide?
 - iv. Where can you get help if you are thinking about suicide?
 - v. How can you intervene if you think a friend or relative may be thinking about suicide?
- b. Step 2: Break students up into five small groups to research the following and assign each group one of the following topics. Have them look at the various extensive internet resource sites provided by organizations such as AFSP, SAMHSA, NASP, and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
 - i. Teen suicide statistics
 - ii. Possible warning signs of suicide
 - iii. Protective factors from suicide
 - iv. How to get help if you are thinking about suicide
 - v. How to intervene if you think a friend or relative may be thinking about suicide
- c. Step 3: Have each group share what they learned on their particular topic with the class.
 - i. This information can be shared verbally or they can create a visual aid as a group to display.

3. **Sharing the Knowledge:** *Students will share information about available resources to support the larger school community.*

- a. Step 1: (Complete only if you didn't do the research activity (#2) or the students did the research activity, but didn't provide information about the hotline in their share-out.) With the students, develop awareness of the new 988 suicide hotline and how it works.
- b. Have students work in partners or small groups to design posters, leaflets, and even social media posts about the 988 hotline. Ask students which resources they think would be most useful if they'd like to include something else.

4. **The Future:** *Students will be able to visualize the future rather than just reacting to the moment they are in right now.*
 - a. As evidenced by Sarah’s discussion with Olivia, people who survive suicide attempts made when they were teens or young adults are often very glad later in life that they didn’t die. Their stories can give hope to younger people who feel hopeless and may think about suicide.
 - b. Discuss the scene with the students. Ask them for their observations and reactions.
 - c. Option 1: Have students role play a scenario where Ricardo’s attempt was not successful and Ricardo, Olivia, and Maria, are all now 30 discussing all of the things that are going well in their lives.
 - i. *Encourage students to keep these role plays realistic and not to suddenly make one of them a billionaire who has been to the moon etc.*
 - d. Option 2: *Have the students simply role play discussing their own lives at 30 and looking back at the impact of high school.*
 - i. NOTE: If students are struggling with this, you can start by having them write out their brief biography up until age 30 as a character study to get the conversation going.

5. **Gossip vs. Seeking Needed Help:** Teens may worry that reporting a friend who is at risk for suicide and getting help for them might be seen as “ratting them out” or being a “gossip.” However, the goal of helping the person and possibly saving their life is more important in this situation than trying to keep a secret.
 - a. Create a chart on the board with the following categories. Have students come up with at least three examples for each category.
 - i. Gossip
 - ii. Ratting Out
 - iii. Getting Help (from Peer)
 - iv. Getting Help (from Adult)
 - b. Do students agree or disagree with these examples?
 - c. Based on the examples, ask students to define the categories (“*Getting Help*” can be one combined category if it’s less confusing for the group, but it is important the students isolate instances where they get help from each other vs an adult.)
 - d. Discuss the differences and why it is important to get support for those who need it, even if you’re not 100% sure.

6. **Intervention:** Students will discuss, think about, and practice the issue of intervention and how much influence they can have as well as the limitations of individual influence
 - Suicidal ideation (thinking generally about suicide) is more common, and less worrisome, than an actual specific **plan** to die by suicide. However, students are not equipped to decide the level of seriousness of a peer’s thoughts about suicide.

- If a student is concerned that a peer is considering suicide, they should ask about it directly as Sarah does in the film, then suggest the friend contact a counselor, a hot line, a parent or a teacher.
- A student concerned that a peer is considering suicide should also talk to a trusted adult themselves. This is **not** tattling or “ratting,” because the aim is to help the peer and possibly save their life, not to get them in trouble.

Exercise:

If you see someone in crisis who can’t breathe or talk and you believe they’re choking, you perform the Heimlich maneuver; if you see someone struggling in the pool, you throw them something to grab onto; if you see a fire, you call 911.

- Ask students for a list of other examples where they would need to quickly jump into action in support of another person until expert help can arrive or take over.
- Mental health is not always as easy to “see”.
 - Going back to the film, what behaviors do you observe that indicate Olivia might be at risk?
 - What first steps did you see taken by those in her close circles?
 - What other steps might have been taken?

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

General info covering multiple topics listed below:

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults/What-You-Need-to-Know-About-Youth-Suicide>

Website providing positive stories of survivors.

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/stories/>

Statistics about teen suicide:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/teen-suicides-increased-many-states-pandemic-rcna25825>

<http://prp.jasonfoundation.com/facts/youth-suicide-statistics/>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/09/11/youth-suicide-rate-increases-cdc-report-finds/3463549001/>

Possible warning signs of and risk factors for suicide:

<https://afsp.org/risk-factors-protective-factors-and-warning-signs>

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/how-we-can-all-prevent-suicide/>

<http://prp.jasonfoundation.com/facts/signs-concerns/>

<http://prp.jasonfoundation.com/facts/common-myths/>

Protective factors making suicide less likely:

<https://afsp.org/risk-factors-protective-factors-and-warning-signs>

How to get help if you are thinking about suicide:

<https://afsp.org/im-having-thoughts-of-suicide>

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/>

How to intervene if you think a friend or relative may be thinking about suicide:

<https://afsp.org/story/how-to-start-and-continue-a-conversation-about-mental-health-a-realconvo-guide-fr>

<https://afsp.org/story/if-someone-tells-you-they-re-thinking-about-suicide-a-realconvo-guide-from-afsp>

<https://afsp.org/when-someone-is-at-risk>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/helping-your-loved-one-suicidal-guide-family-friends/PEP20-01-03-001>

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/preventing-youth-suicide/save-a-friend-tips-for-teens-to-prevent-suicide>

Resources for people who have lost someone to suicide:

<https://afsp.org/ive-lost-someone>

Resources for people who have attempted suicide and survived:

<https://afsp.org/after-an-attempt>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/A-Journey-Toward-Health-and-Hope-Your-Handbook-for-Recovery-After-a-Suicide-Attempt/SMA15-4419>

How to get involved in suicide prevention and awareness:

<https://afsp.org/make-a-difference>

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people age 15 to 24 in the U.S. Nearly 20% of high school students report serious thoughts of suicide and 9% have made an attempt to take their lives, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

If you or someone you love is in crisis, text or call 988.