

There Can Be Light
Parent / Guardian
COMPANION GUIDE

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the
glowmedia
project

Mental health education for a new generation

FROM THE PRODUCER

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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. Please consider continuing the conversation in the home. Talking about suicide is one of the most effective ways to prevent it.

Sincerely, Trish Glowacki,

Executive Director, the glowmedia project
Executive Producer, ***There Can Be Light***
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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

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?

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?

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.