

American Association of Suicidology Responds to Parkland Students' Suicide Deaths

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, March 25, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Our hearts go out to the families and community of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School student and alumnus who died by suicide over the last week. The American Association of Suicidology (AAS) sends an open invitation to the suicide loss survivors and community stakeholders to reach out to AAS and other national suicide prevention organizations for consultation in the days ahead.



While we're supportive of the school's efforts to increase mental health resources for its students and their families, we believe much more needs to be done to ensure ongoing suicide prevention and postvention care. This includes consultation with suicide prevention experts, disseminating information to students and their families on means safety (explicitly regarding firearm and prescription medication storage in the home), and providing significant, trauma-informed, evidence-based supports as outlined in texts such as [Suicide In Schools](#).

Youth involved in traumatic experiences are often at higher risk for a number of mental health issues, including experiences of suicidal thoughts. In the United States, youth aged 10 - 24 are already at especially high risk for suicide, which is the second leading cause of death for this age range. AAS continues to advocate for suicide prevention as a priority in school districts across the country.

"The Parkland survivors have been heroes in their advocacy efforts since the tragedy, but the deaths of these students are a sobering reminder that they are not only young advocates, but also trauma victims and gun violence loss survivors," said Michael Anestis, PhD, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi and co-chair of AAS's Firearms and Suicide Committee. "This experience has likely been different for each of them and this should be a call for everyone - regardless of their views on firearms in the US - to unite around the fact that these kids have gone through something horrific and deserve all the effective care they need."

Trauma can cause feelings of hopelessness and loss of control - such that one's view of the world, it's safeness and predictability, are often challenged. Trauma that involves the death of a loved one or peer through mass violence or suicide can powerfully reshape someone's view of life, their future, and trust in others. Additionally, suicide contagion effects tend to be most powerful in the days and weeks following a suicide or violent death but that anniversaries or other personal reminders can also stir up intense emotional reactions. Notably, this is a community (and a national) trauma and we should be mindful that the youth have taken on a major advocacy role that has the potential to define their childhoods. Promoting self-care and boundaries is crucial for them now and well into their futures.

For the Media: Responsible reporting on suicide, including stories of hope and resilience, can prevent more suicides. Please visit the [Suicide Reporting Recommendations](#) for more information.

About AAS: Founded in 1968 by Edwin S. Shneidman, PhD, AAS promotes suicide as a research discipline, public awareness programs, public education and training for professionals and volunteers. The membership of AAS includes mental health and public health professionals, researchers, suicide prevention and crisis intervention centers, school districts, crisis center volunteers, survivors of suicide loss, attempt survivors, and a variety of lay persons who have in interest in suicide prevention. You can learn more about AAS at www.suicidology.org and www.aas365.org.

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