

**PROTECTOR**  
OVERWATCH

# How To Talk To Firefighters About Suicide

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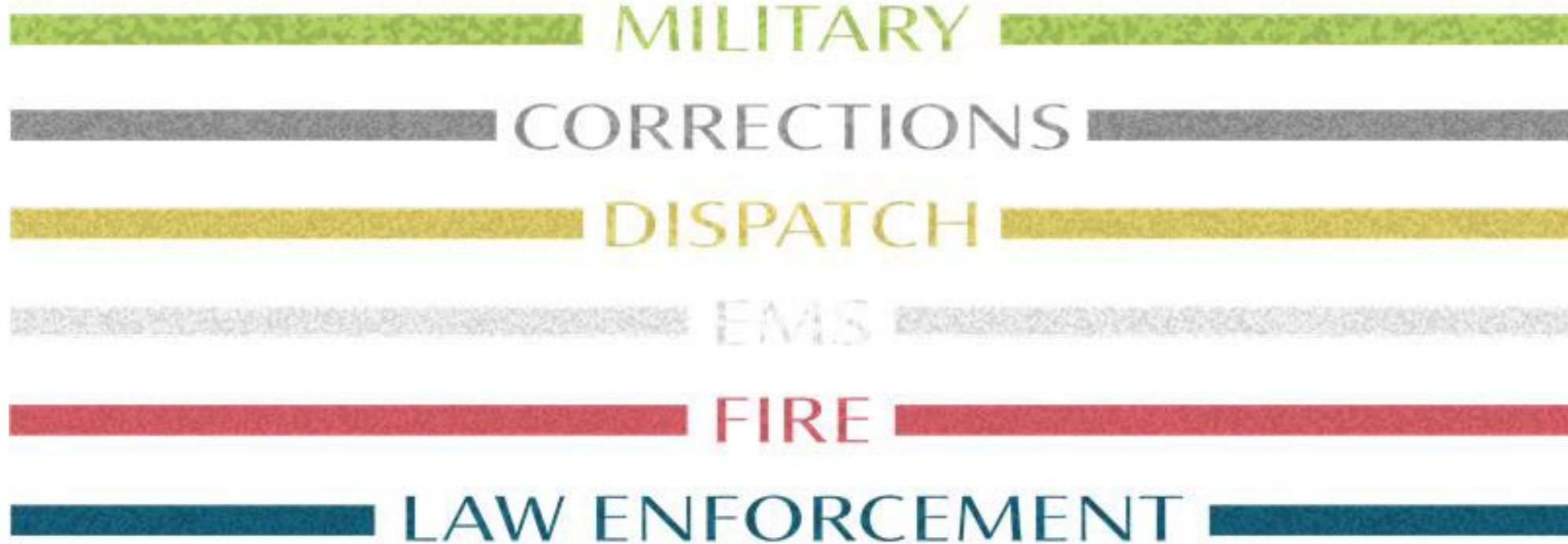
*Protector Overwatch Program Director*

# Mission



*Using integrity, grit, and humor to serve and support those who serve and support our communities*

# Populations Served





# Protector Overwatch Services

- Customized Support
- Wellness Check-ins
- Cops Helping Cops Support Group
- Critical Incident Response
- Peer Support Team Development, Clinical Leadership, & Training
- Medication Management
- Training and Education
- Network of Protector Friendly Providers

# The “S” Word



**Stigma** - A set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or a group of people have about something

**Types of stigma:** Perceived public stigma, internalized stigma (self stigma), anticipated stigma, and attitudes towards a person getting help.

Why is stigma so much heavier in the populations we serve?

# Increased Risk in Vulnerable Populations



- Certain types of news coverage can increase the likelihood of suicide in vulnerable individuals
- Risks increases when:
  - The story explicitly describes the suicide method
  - Uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images
  - Repeated/extensive coverage sensationalizes or glamourizes death



# Best Practice



Avoid	Instead
Specifics about method & location	Death was suicide; keep info general
Content of a suicide note	Note was found & under review
Personal details about the person	Keep info about the person general
Suicide as a common or acceptable response to hardship	Coping skills, support, & treatment work for most people who think about suicide
Oversimplifying or speculating on the reason why	Describe warning signs & risk factors that give context
Sensationalizing details in the headline or story	Report using facts and language that are sensitive
Overstating suicide by using terms like “epidemic” or “skyrocketing”	Research the best available data and use words like “increase” and “rise”
Prominent placement of stories related to a suicide death	Place a print article inside the paper or magazine

# Suicide Terminology



## Suicide

Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior

## Suicide Attempt

Nonfatal self-directed potentially injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior

## Suicide Behavior

Includes suicide, suicide attempts, and preparatory acts

## Suicide Ideation

Passive thoughts about wanting to be dead or active thoughts about killing oneself that is not accompanied by preparatory behavior

## Non-Suicidal Self Injury

Direct and deliberate self-harm enacted without the intent to die

## Suicide Contagion

When one or more suicides are reported in a way that contribute to another suicide



# No-No Words



Commit

Complete

Failed attempt

Failed suicide

Successful  
suicide

# Risk Factors, Protective Factors, & Warning Signs



# Risk Factors



Demographics

History of NSSI

Previous Mental health Diagnosis

Smoking

Perfectionism

Recent loss

# Protective Factors



Coping and problem-solving skills

Social connection

Supportive network

Cultural or religious beliefs

Sense of purpose

Effective healthcare



# Warning Signs



# Things They Say...

I just want to die

What's the point of living?

They'd be better off without me

I don't see how things will get any better

I just feel trapped. I want to go to sleep and not wake up.

# Things They Do



Increased alcohol  
or drug use

Preparatory  
behaviors

Withdrawing from  
activities

Isolating from  
friends and family

Sleeping or eating  
too much or too  
little

Visiting or calling  
people to say  
goodbye

Giving away  
possessions

Increased  
aggression or anger

# How They Feel



Hopeless

Numb

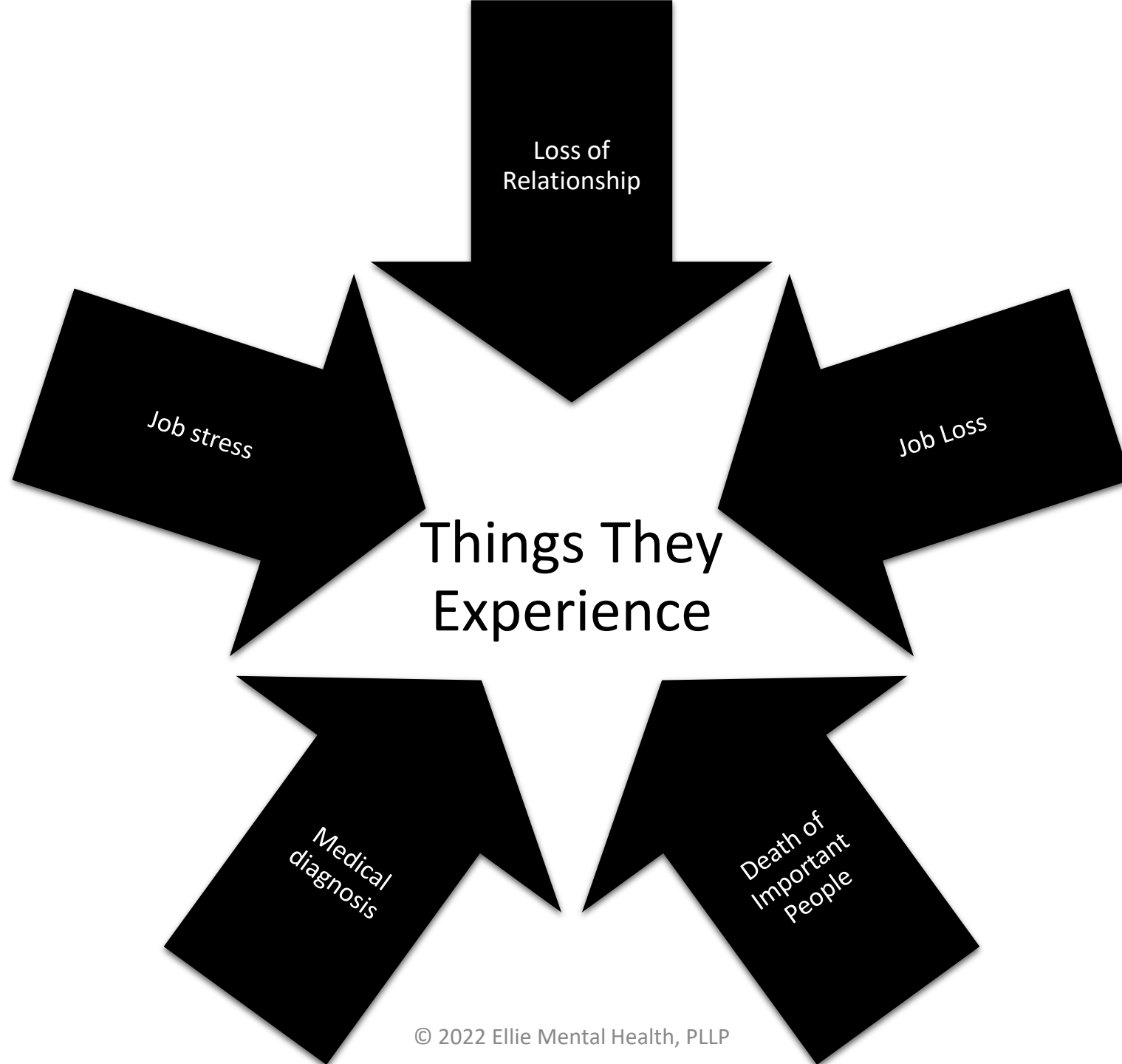
Helpless

Trapped

Burdensomeness

Unbearable  
psychological pain





# How To Have The Tough Conversation



# Things You Need to Know



The facts

What to  
look for

What to  
say

What not  
to say

What to do



## Know The Facts

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You can't put the idea in someone's head

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Suicide crises are time-limited

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Suicide is not an impulsive act

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Most people can talk themselves out of it, if given the opportunity

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They don't always leave a note

# Know What To Look For



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Feeling trapped

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Unbearable physical or psychological pain

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Burdensomeness

---

Anxiety or agitation

---

Recklessness

---

Withdrawal

---

Loneliness or isolation

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Extreme change in mood



## Know What To Say

- Show them the evidence
- Normalize their thoughts and feelings
- Ask directly

Sometimes when people are sleeping more than usual, withdrawing from their friends, and are having money problems, they are thinking about suicide. Are you thinking about suicide?

# Know What Not To Say



No-No Words

You're not  
thinking about  
suicide, are  
you?

You're not going  
to do  
something  
stupid, are you?

"I promise xyz"

# Potential Challenges



FEAR OF CONSEQUENCES



LIARS!



# Know What To Do



1

Appear  
confident

2

Treat it like any  
other  
conversation

3

Be genuine

4

Ask for help if  
needed

5

Connect to  
resources

# Resources



Peer Support

988

Protector  
Overwatch- Ellie  
Mental Health (651-  
319-1059)

\*Someone who can  
*increase* their safety

# Resources

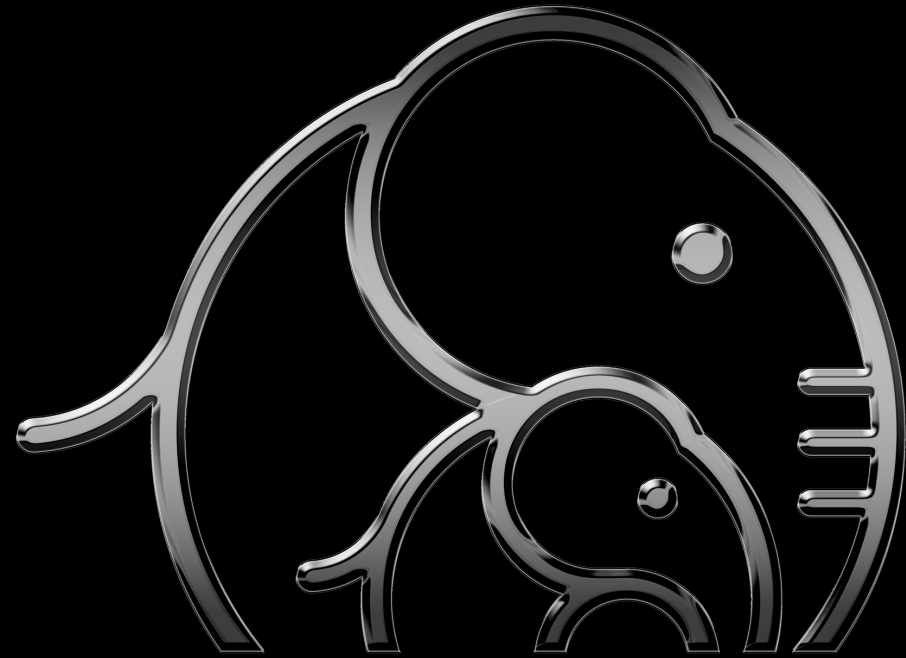


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