Pono Players

Hawaii Children's Theatre

Is it a Choice, If it's the Only Choice?

Suicide Awareness Video

Classroom Reference Guide

Hawaii Children's Theatre is a non profit organization founded in 1996. HCT plays host to an ensemble of artists who bring unique vision and creativity of meaningful theatre for young audiences. Our vision is to enrich the lives of young people throughout the community through live theatre.

Pono Players is a peer education troupe of young actors. We translate serious issues into non-threatening stories that address a variety of problems that face today's youth.

Message to the Instructors

Aloha,
Suicide can be a very sensitive subject, but now more than ever it needs to be discussed. The students and staff of Pono Players spent months researching this topic in order to put this program together. This video can be informational, however, most of the value of this program comes from the discussion that follows.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Suicide is a serious public health problem that can have lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities." A lot of people feel that those who complete suicide are making a selfish choice. But, is it a choice, if it's the only choice? Our research has shown us that when people are suffering from suicidal thoughts their perception of the world around them narrows and they lose their ability to see other options and view suicide as their only choice.

Hawaii Children's Theatre has created this brochure as a reference for you when viewing our Pono Players' "*Is It a Choice If It's The Only Choice?*" suicide awareness video with your classroom. We have included the same information which is found in the video for ease of reference and discussion with your students.

The video will ask you to pause it 5 times: once after each scene. During these pauses, please take the time to ask your students the questions we have provided below to create a discussion surrounding the circumstances of each scene and potential resolutions. These questions are meant to start a discussion; where each classroom takes the conversation will be unique to the students involved. You may choose to rephrase the questions based on your knowledge of the students in your classroom.

Mahalo,

Dolly Kanekuni, President of HCT

And

Erin Gaines, Administrator for HCT

WARNING SIGNS

There are several warning signs that can help you identify someone that may be struggling with suicidal ideation.

1. Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves.
2. Looking for a way to kill themselves.
3. Talking about feeling hopeless, or having no reason to live.
4. Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
5. Talking about being a burden to others.
6. Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
7. Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
8. Sleeping too little or too much.
9. Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
10. Showing rage, or talking about seeking revenge.
11. Displaying extreme mood swings.

#BeThe1ToSteps

1. **Ask:** Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions: Are you thinking about hurting or killing yourself.
2. **The Keep Them Safe:** If your friend is thinking about suicide, ask them if they have also thought how they would do it. Separate them from anything they are thinking of using to hurt themselves.
3. **Be There:** Listen without judgement and with compassion and empathy.
4. **Help Them Connect:** Help them connect to a support system so they have others to reach out to for help. Family, friends, clergy, or a therapist.
5. **Follow Up:** Check in with the person you care about on a regular basis.

RESOURCES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Hotline
Text ALOHA to 741741

Hawaii Suicide & Crisis Hotline
1-800-753-6879

In Case of Emergency, Call 911

DISCUSSION

After each scene, please pause the video and ask your students the following questions. We have provided a few sample answers to help you to guide this lesson. Please refer to the Scene Specific questions below for more detail about each scene.

1. Which character(s) in this scene were in crisis?

*Help your students identify anyone in this scene who may be in crisis. Often, it is more than one character. How do they know that that character is in crisis? What are the signs?

2. What was going on in this scene?

*Student X may be going into crisis for reasons X,Y or Z. Help your class to understand how a student faced with this situation may be pushed into a crisis.
*The following warning signs were seen in this scene. Help your class to identify any of the warning signs we discussed earlier.
*A participant in this scene used a #BeThe1To Step. Help your class to identify any of the #BeThe1To Steps we discussed earlier. Who tried to use them? Were they successful?

3. What would have happened if we did not pause the scene?

*The student is crisis may have reacted in ways X,Y or Z. Help your class to understand where being in crisis may lead someone emotionally and/or physically You may use the Warning Signs we discussed earlier. If presented with these circumstances, would they go get help? Would they retreat further into shame or depression? Would they consider hurting themselves or someone else?
*The other students in the scene may have reacted in the ways X, Y or Z.

4. What could be done differently to help the character in crisis and change the outcome of the scene?

*Is there a #BeThe1To Step that another character in the scene could use? Who? Which one? How? What would are the potential outcomes of using this step? Do we need to introduce another character entirely to the scene? Who? What could they do to help?

5. Which of the #BeThe1ToSteps could have been used in the scene and where?

*Ask each student how they would use a #BeThe1To step. Where would they use it? Which one? What would the new outcome be?

SCENE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Here are some examples of more in depth discussions we were faced with when we performed this program for schools on Kauai. Please use these as a guideline to start conversations in your classroom.

Cybercide

1. Can you relate to the character in crisis?
2. Could this happen in your school? If it did, how long do you think it would take to recover from the embarrassment?
   *Use this question as a way for your students to acknowledge that even seemingly small actions such as these may have lasting effects on someone.
3. Was our main character's best friend helpful? Why or why not?
4. What are some ideas that you could do to de-escalate the situation?
5. Is there someone else in this scene who could help to de-escalate the situation? Who? How?

Misunderstood

1. Point out that the father in this scene may be more in crisis than the son. How does this affect his relationship with his son? How does this affect his son?
2. What are some other ways the father could have spoken to his son?
3. Have you experienced tension with your parents?
   *This question can be used to help your students understand that they may not be alone in having issues at home. Help them to understand where to seek help with the provided resources.

Wait

1. Notice that no one in this scene stood up for our main character. What could have changed if they had? How could someone have intervened?
2. How would you feel after a big public break up like the one shown in this scene? Would you stand up for someone going through this? How?

What Now?

1. What are some reasons people choose to cut themselves?
   *This question often brought up the answer: "Attention". Why would someone seek attention in this way? How would your students react to someone seeking attention this way?
2. What if they cut themselves in a place no one sees? What would be a reason for that?
   *This question is used to help your students think about reasons other than attention for why someone would intentionally cause self harm. Some answers include: "physical pain masks emotional pain" and "cutting yourself puts you in control of your body and what happens to it when you feel out of control in other areas of your life". What are other ways to gain control in your life? (You may use the resources suggested in the video or this handout to help students find other outlets.)

Over the Edge

1. Note that both characters are in crisis in this scene.
2. What circumstances could cause someone to be a bully?