

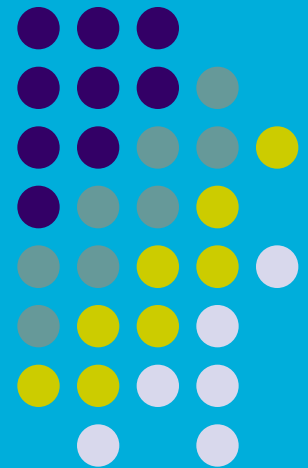


SOCIETY *for the*
PREVENTION *of*
TEEN SUICIDE

MAKING EDUCATORS PARTNERS IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

LIFELINES:
**A School-Based Youth
Suicide Prevention Initiative**

Maureen M. Underwood, LCSW

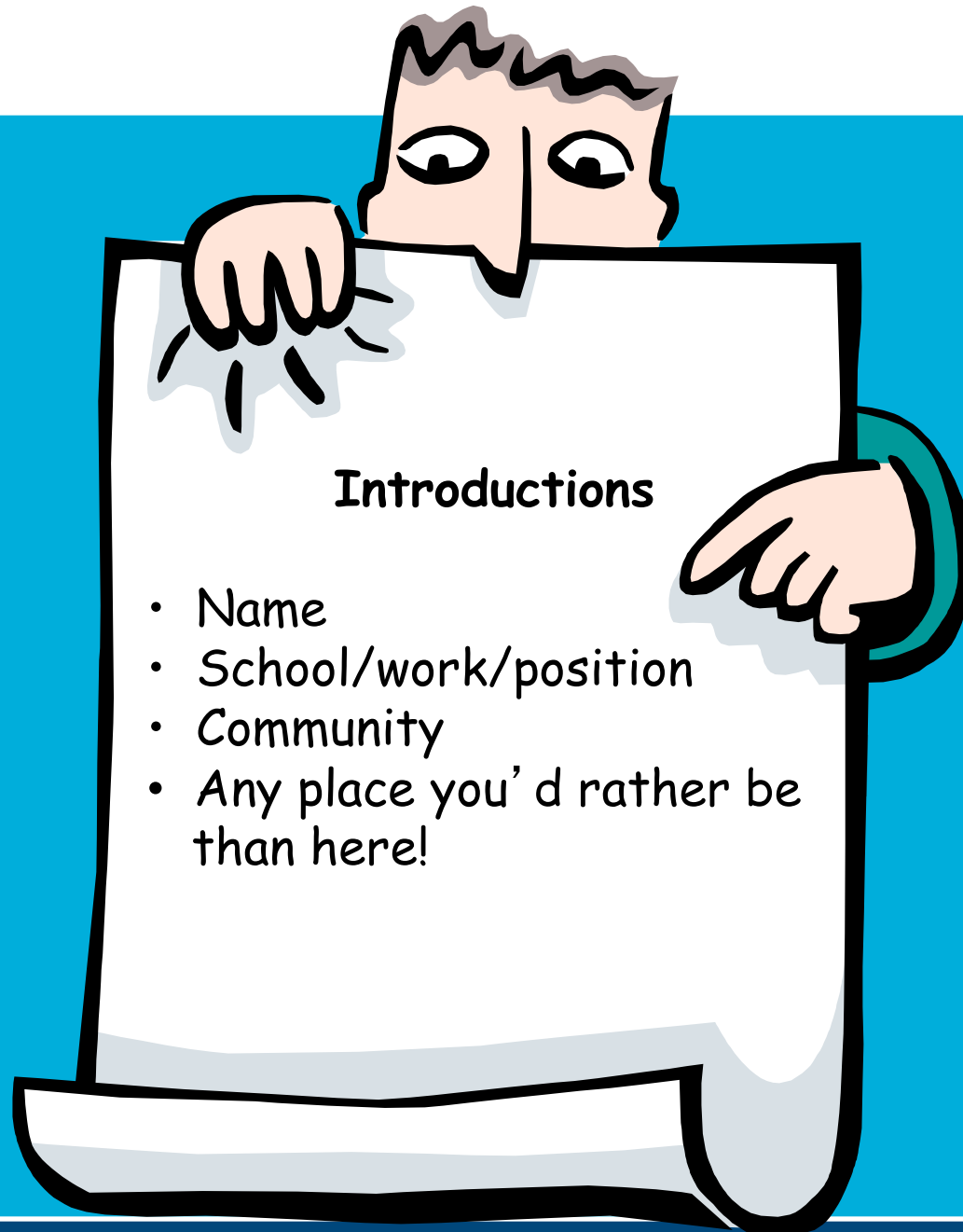


Presenter

Maureen Underwood, LSCW, CPG

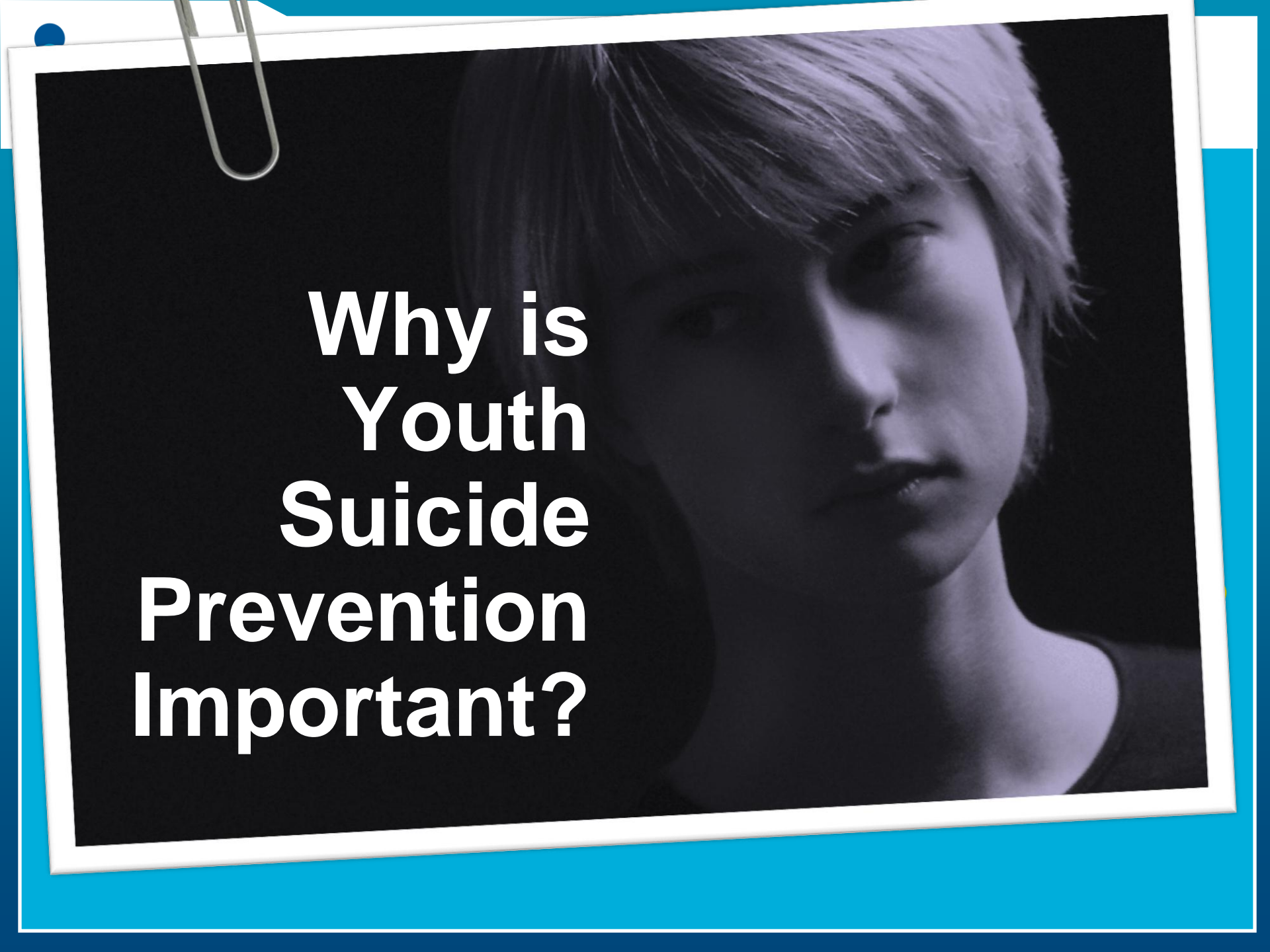


- Coordinator of New Jersey Adolescent Suicide Prevention Project 1985–2000
- Author of numerous publications, including *LIFELINES* Prevention, Intervention & Postvention
- Author of NASW Policy Statement on Adolescent Suicide
- Clinical Director, the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide



Educational Objectives

- Review benefits
- Correct myths
- Present accurate data
- Outline roles
- Discuss interaction with students
- Provide additional resources



**Why is
Youth
Suicide
Prevention
Important?**

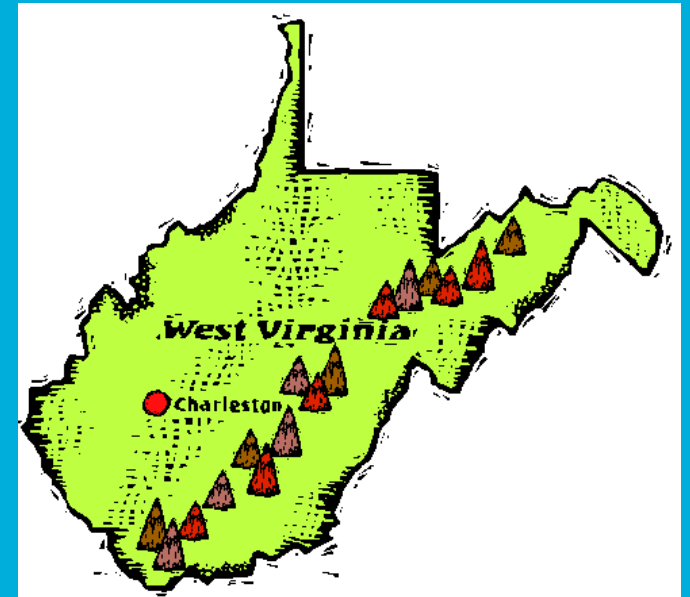
Did You Know Suicide Is...

- The third leading cause of death among teens
- The second leading cause of death among college students
- For every completion, there are between 50-200 attempts
- CDC Youth Risk Survey: 7.8% of students in grades 9-12 reported an attempt in the past year
- 15.8% of high school students report suicide ideation
- The suicide attempt rate is increasing for 10-14 year olds
- Risk and protective factors for suicide are the same as other problem behaviors such as drugs, violence, risky sexual activities

Closer to Home...

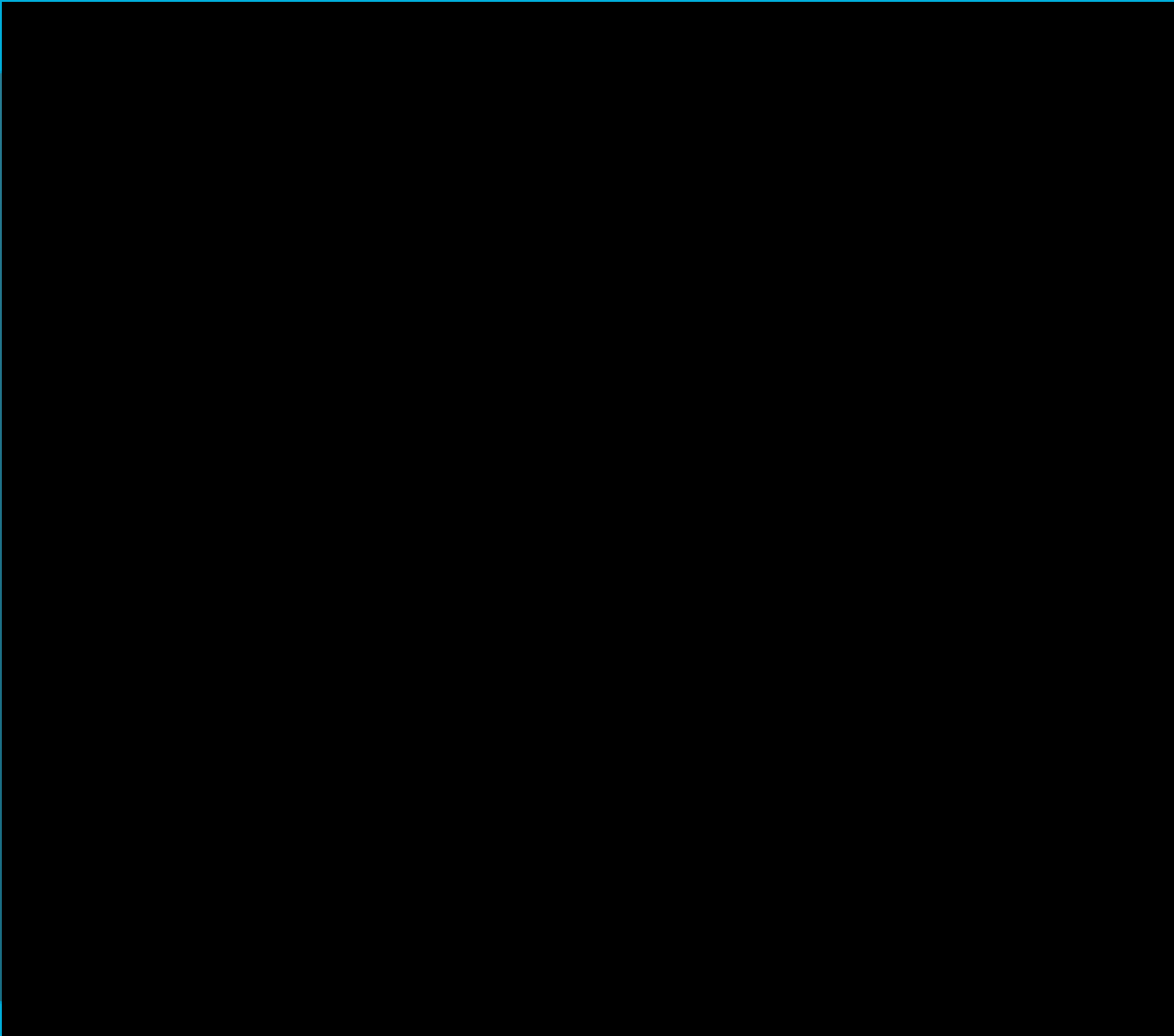
In 2011 in West Virginia

- 13.0 % youth considered suicide
- 5.5% youth attempted



EVERY...

- **EVERY Year**
 - *there are approximately 10 youth suicides for every 100,000 youth*
- **EVERY Day**
 - *there are approximately 11 youth suicides*
- **EVERY 2 Hours and 11 Minutes**
 - *a person under the age of 25 completes suicide*



Can We Prevent Suicide With People Who “Really Want To Do It”?

- Golden Gate Bridge jumper, where only 2% survive (220 foot fall at 75 mph): “I instantly thought everything that was unfixable was totally fixable—except for just having jumped; my first thought was, ‘what did I just do? I don’t want to die!’ ”
- Of 515 people that survived a GG Bridge jump since records were kept, 26 years later only 6% later went on to kill themselves (Seiden, SLTB, 1978)



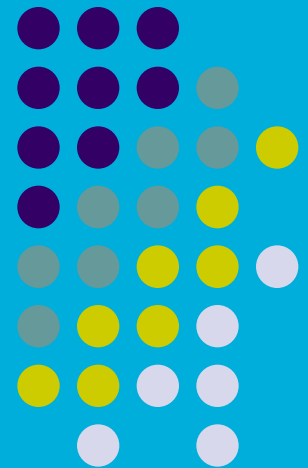
The Basis for Suicide Prevention

[Jobes, 2000]

- ◆ Most people do not want to end their biological existence
- ◆ Most people DO want to end unbearable psychological pain and suffering
- ◆ Most suicidal people tell other people directly or indirectly they are thinking about suicide
- ◆ The vast majority of people who die by suicide have diagnosable and treatable mental disorders and various psychosocial problems

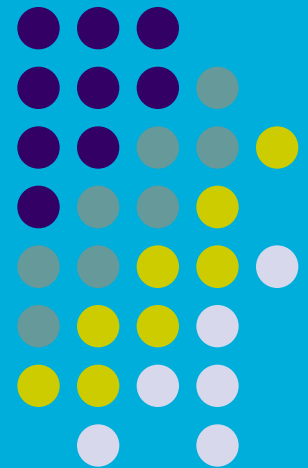
Does the School Have a Role

In Suicide Prevention??



YES!! School's Role:

- Critical
- Limited
- Falls under the mandate to provide a safe learning environment



Why Educator Training is Important:

According to the Carnegie Task Force on Education:

School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students, but when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge.

“Competent School Community”

THE CONTEXT FOR PREVENTION

- All members of the school community are concerned about the welfare of each other
- They know how to obtain help for those who need it



Assumptions About Competent Community

Administration

- Are concerned about welfare & safety of school community
- Recognize that using a proactive approach can forestall problems
- Support “zero tolerance” for violence which includes self-violence

Faculty

- Are committed to provision of knowledge and enhancing life- skills
- Are receptive to self-learning that facilitates teaching and supports the classroom learning environment

Parents

- Are generally unaware of dimensions of youth suicide
- Require & appreciate accurate information to facilitate effective decision-making about their children

Students

- Are developmentally reliant upon peers
- Respond to practical, action-oriented behavior alternatives
- Will use adult support if they perceive it as helpful

Your School's First Official Step:

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Provide the guidelines for crisis response of support, control & structure
- Demonstrate administrative commitment and support
- Outline a prepared and planned response



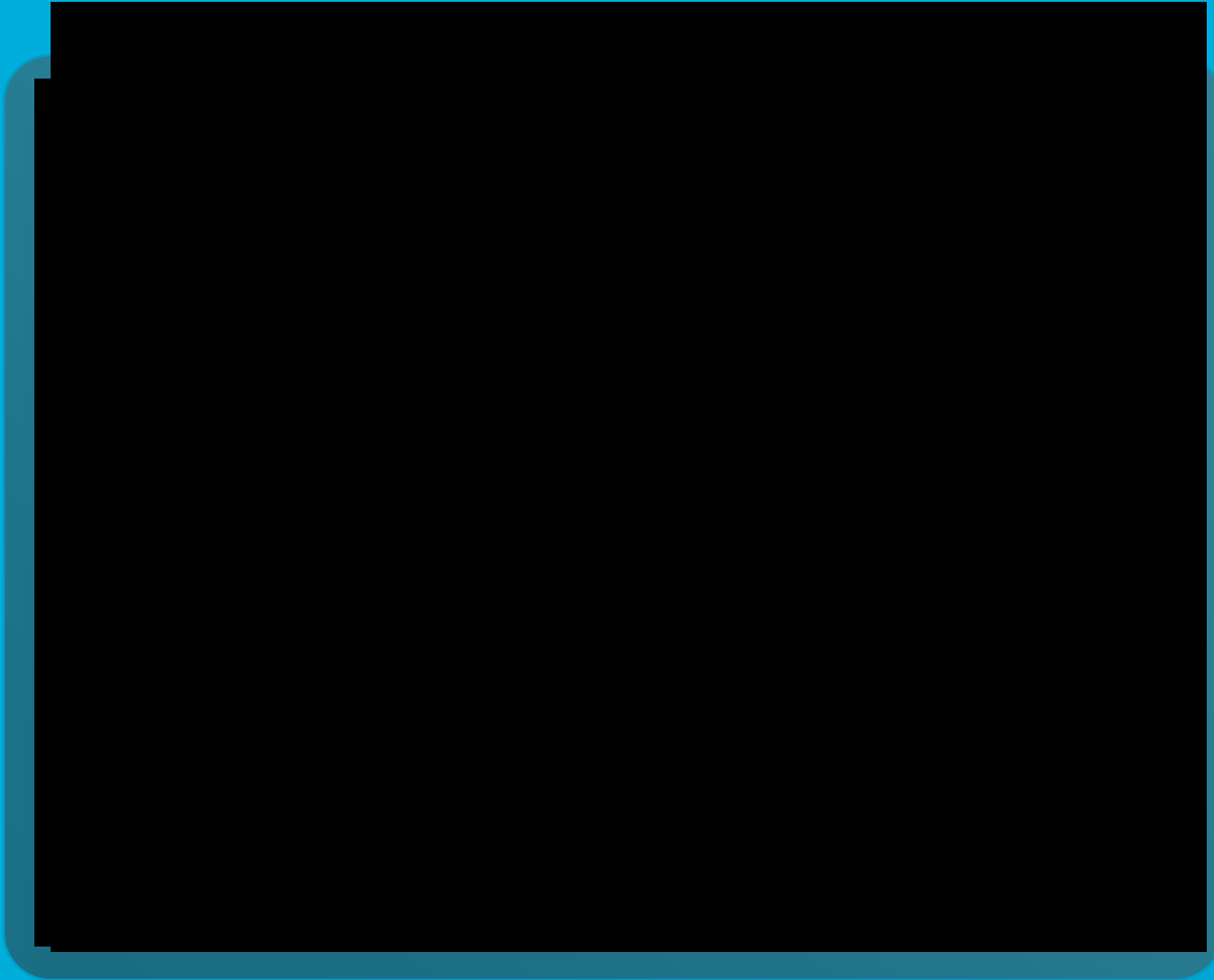
Role of Faculty & Staff

- Understand the importance of your critical but limited role in the identification of students at-risk for suicide
- Familiarize yourself with school policies and procedures that address this issue
- Learn information that facilitates identification of at-risk students
- Listen to students, verbally and nonverbally, for warning signs
- Identify those students who may be at elevated risk based on that identification
- Refer those students to appropriate resources

Staff Role Simplified:

- ***Learning***
signs of risk in students
- ***Identifying***
at-risk students
- ***Referring***
to appropriate resources





Role of Parents

- Understand school's policies and procedures
- Recognize signs of trouble in their children
- Know what to do and where to go for resources
- Understand how to respond to other at-risk youth

Not MY Kid

What Every Parent Should
Know About Teen Suicide.



**Watch Our
17 Minute
Video**

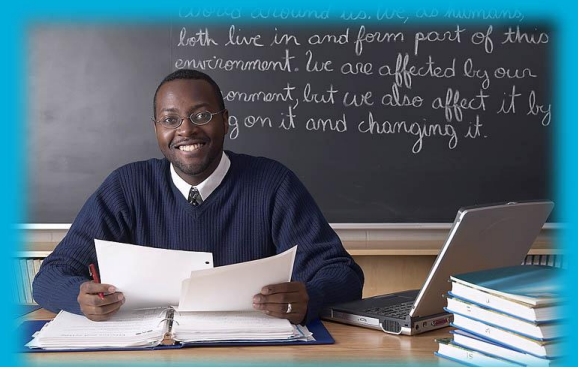
[Click Here](#)

Role of Students

- Awareness of warning signs
- Strategies for getting help personally
- Knowledge of ways to help peers
- Awareness of school and community resources
- Identification of ‘caring’ adults

Your First Step:

Assessing Your Attitudes About Suicide



Questions to Consider:

1. I think suicide is a rational choice.

sometimes

Always



Never

Questions to Consider:

2. I think suicide should be prevented no matter what.

sometimes

Always



Never

Questions to Consider:

3. Because it can be so hard to talk about, I think it is important to respect a student's confidences about suicide.

sometimes



Always

Never

Questions to Consider:

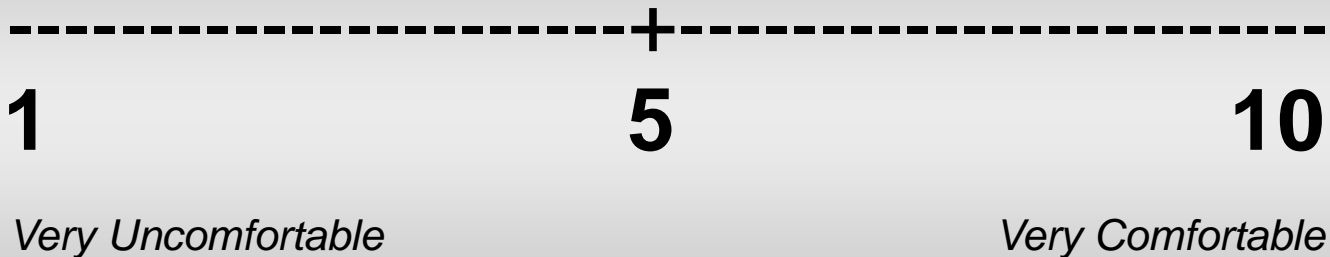
I would do everything I could to prevent my teenager from dating someone who had attempted suicide.

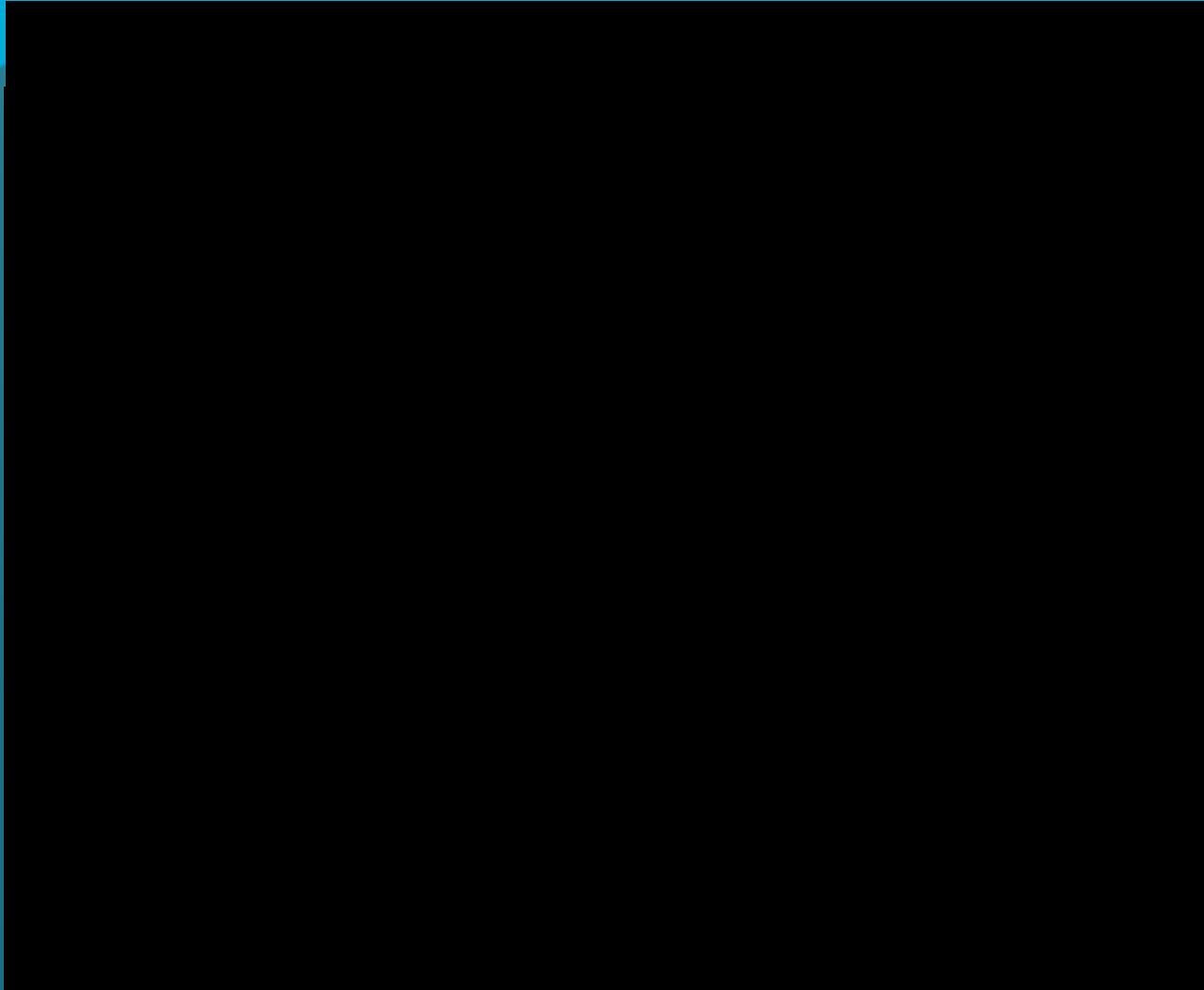


I would respect my child's choice.

Talking About Suicide

On a 1 to 10 scale, rank how comfortable you are talking about suicide.





Defining the Problem

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

*is a potentially self-injurious act
committed with at least some intent
to die as a result of the act*

SUICIDE

*is an attempt to solve a problem
of intense emotional pain
with impaired problem-solving skills*

Characteristics of Suicide

1. Alternative to problem perceived as unsolvable by any other means
2. Crisis thinking colors problem solving
3. Person is often ambivalent
4. Suicidal solution has an irrational component
5. Suicide is a form of communication

Risk Factors / Warning Signs

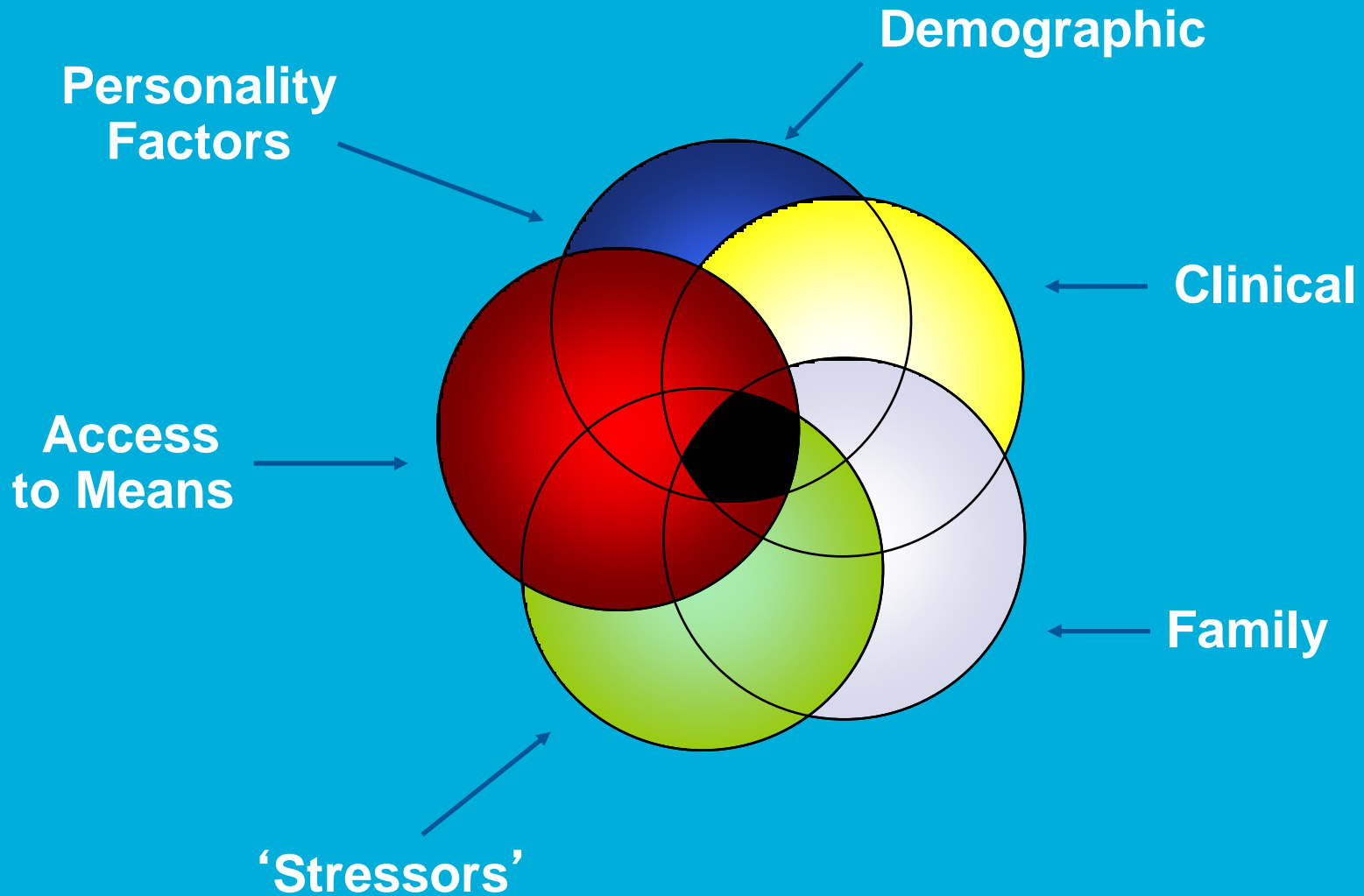
Red - Warning Signs

Yellow - Risk Factors

Green - Protective Factors



Risk Factors for Youth Suicide



Risk Factors

DEMOGRAPHIC

- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Sexual Orientation

CLINICAL

- Psychiatric diagnosis
- Drug / alcohol use
- Previous attempt



Risk Factors

FAMILY

- *History of suicide*

EXPOSURE

- *To suicide (personally or in media)*
- *Death of peer under any circumstance*

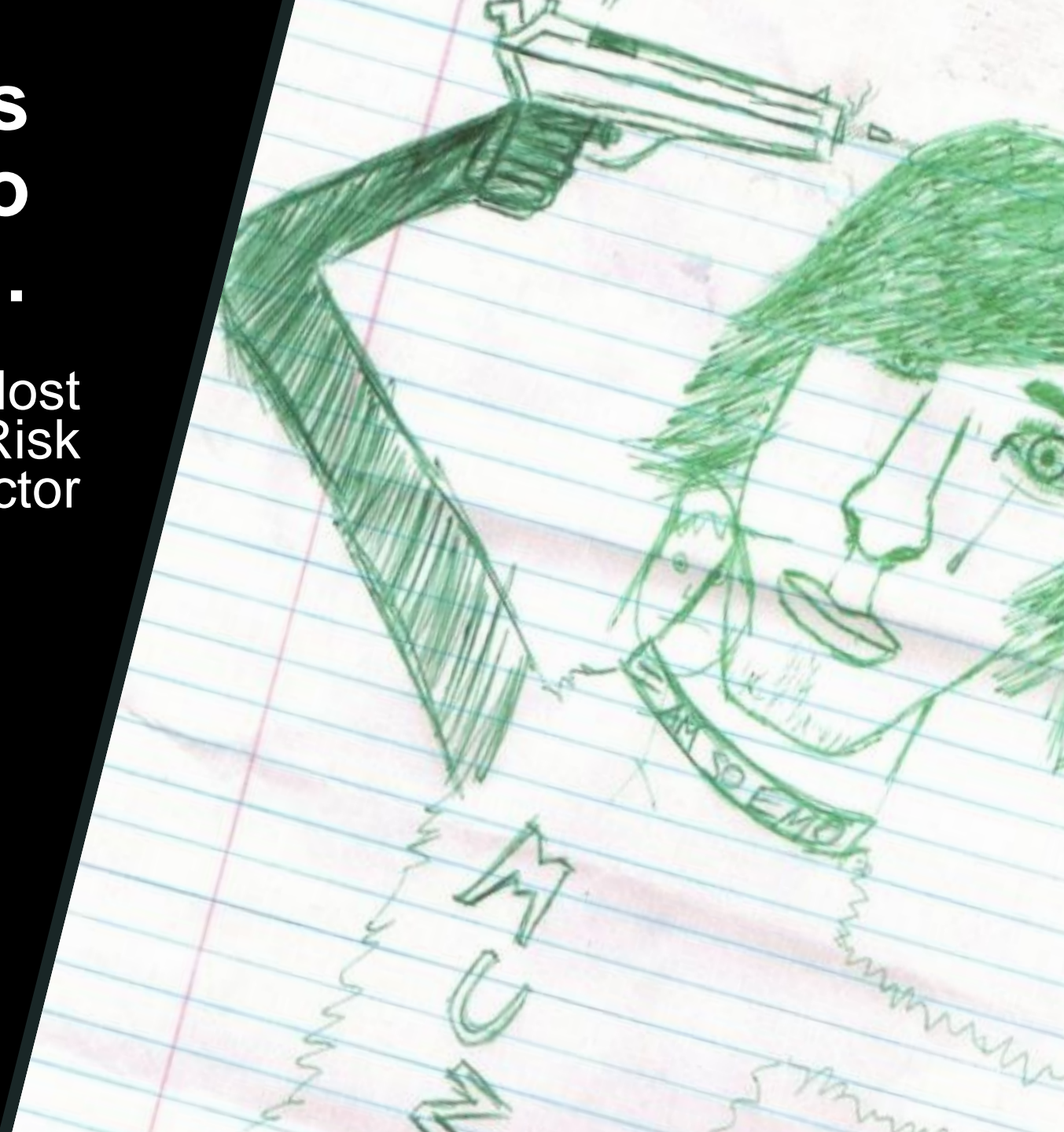
RECENT, SEVERE STRESSORS

- *Loss*
- *Trouble*
- *Change – transition*

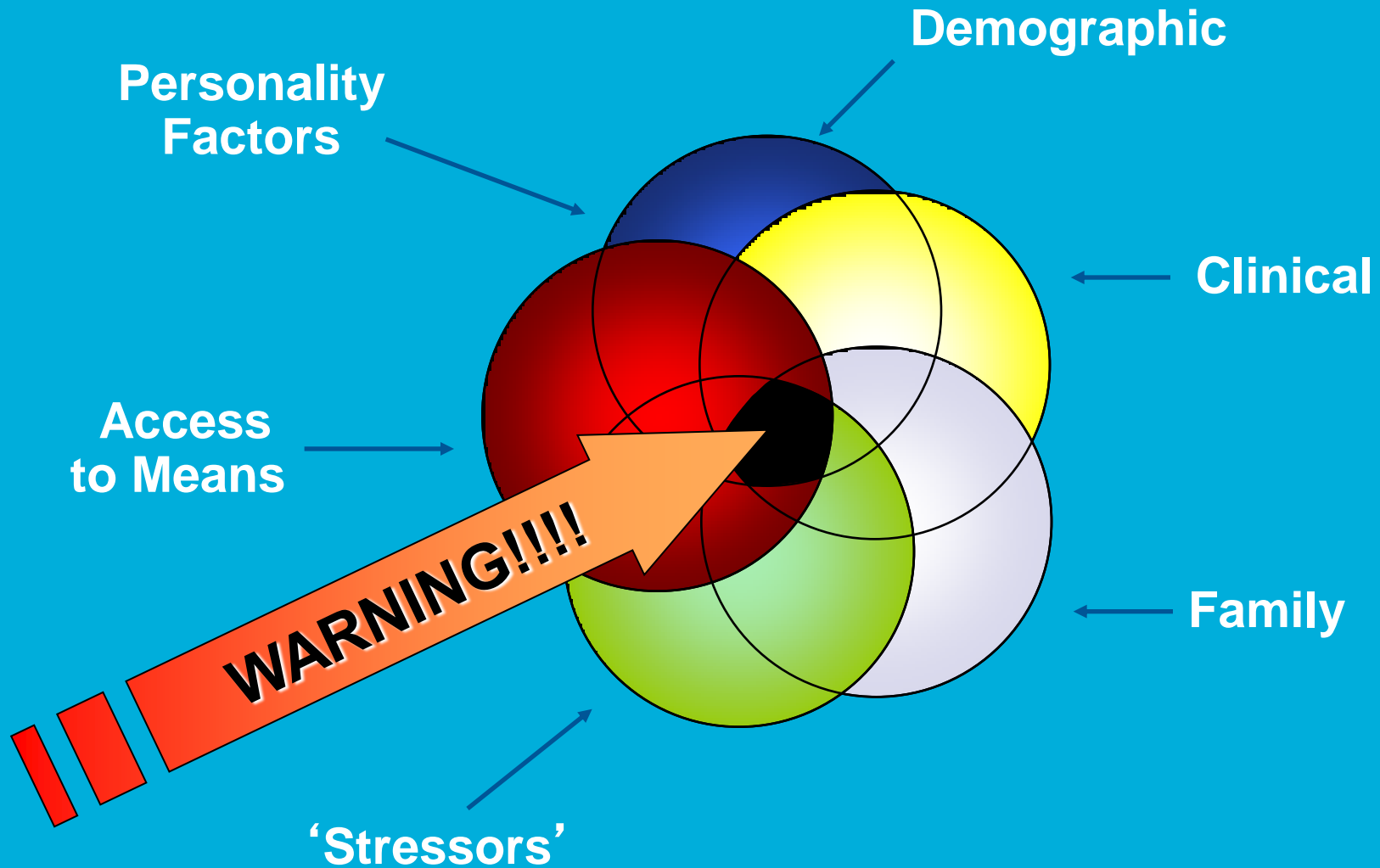


Access to Means...

...Most
Preventable Risk
Factor



Risk Factors for Youth Suicide



THE PERFECT STORM



Warning Signs



***F**eelings*

***A**ctions*

***C**hanges*

***T**hreats*

***S**ituations*

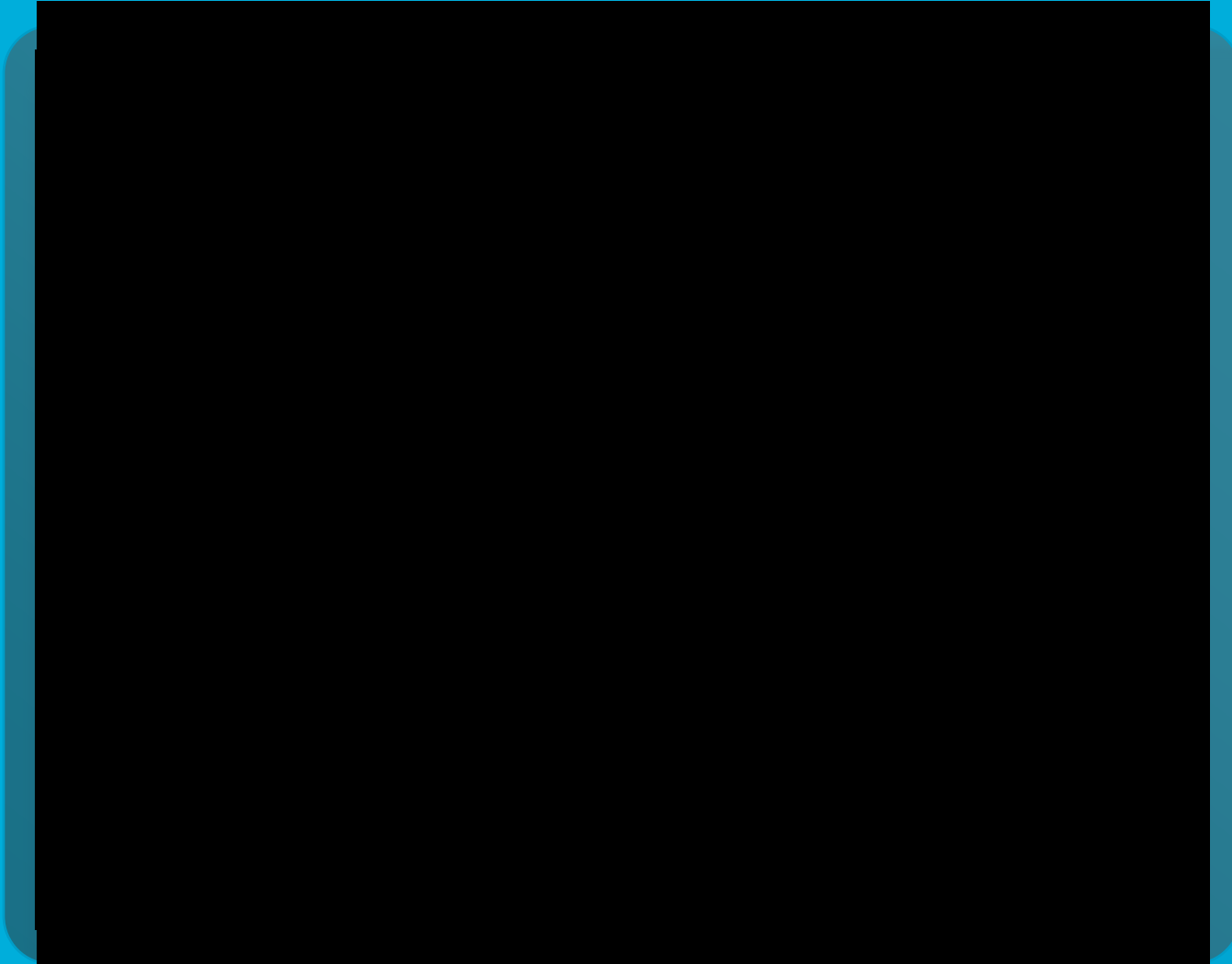
Making it Real...

DEALING WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS

- **BRAD**
- James
- Elena
- Conner



Making it Real... Brad



What Going on With Brad?

- WARNING SIGNS?
 - ◆ Feelings- angry, upset about the death of his friend,
 - ◆ Actions- risky behavior, aggressive, fighting with his girlfriend, speeding ticket
 - ◆ Changes- grades, no longer concerned about school performance
 - ◆ Threats-
 - ◆ Situations- Exposure

Students at Higher Risk

- Threatening suicide
- Looking for access to means
- Talking or writing about death, dying, suicide
- Previous attempt serious enough to require hospitalization



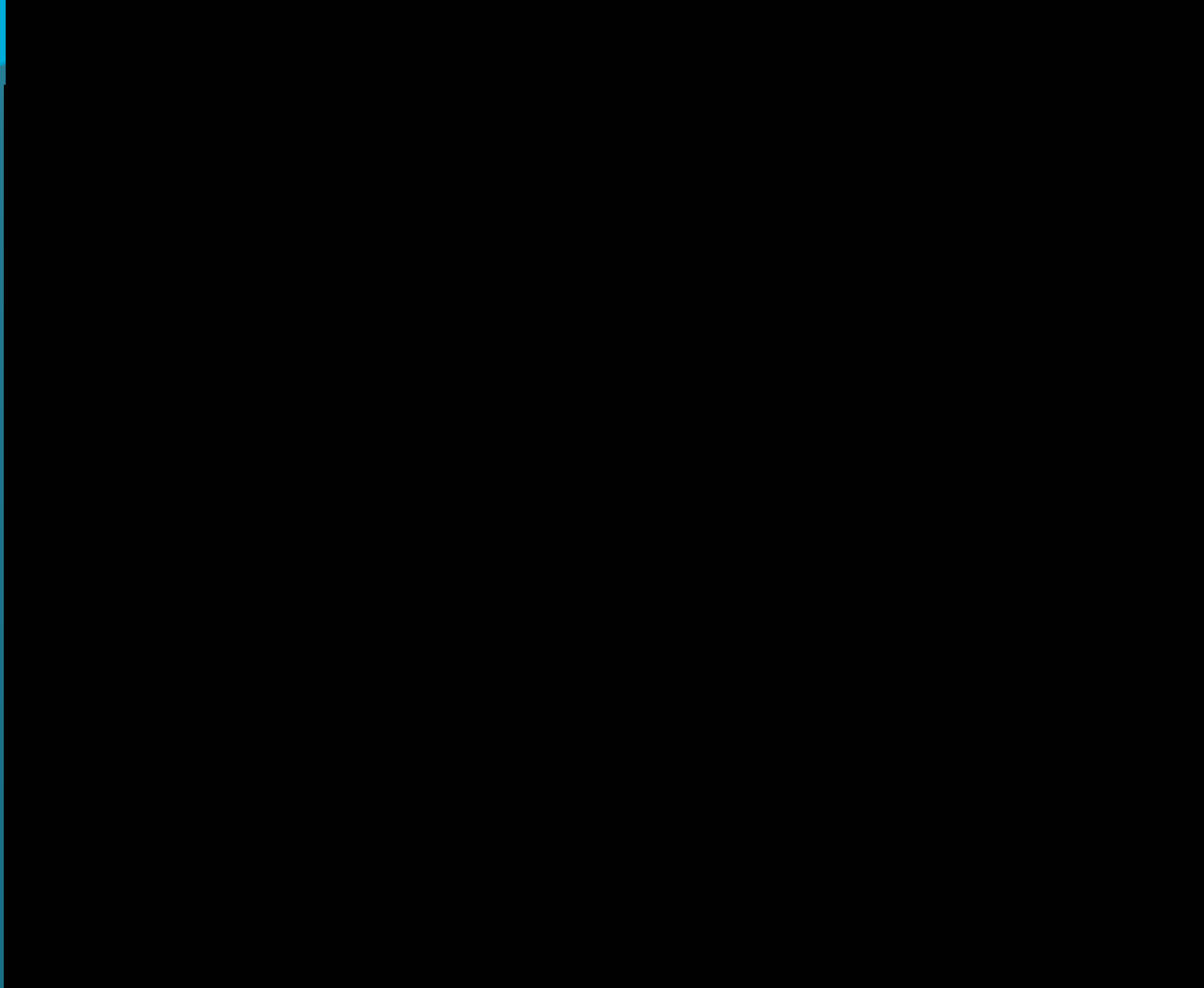
Making it Real...

DEALING WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS

- Brad
- **JAMES**
- Elena
- Conner



Making it Real... James



Dealing with At-Risk Students

- Pay attention to who your students are, not just how they perform academically
 - ◆ Notice appearance
 - ◆ Observe social skills / relationships
 - ◆ Monitor behavior changes



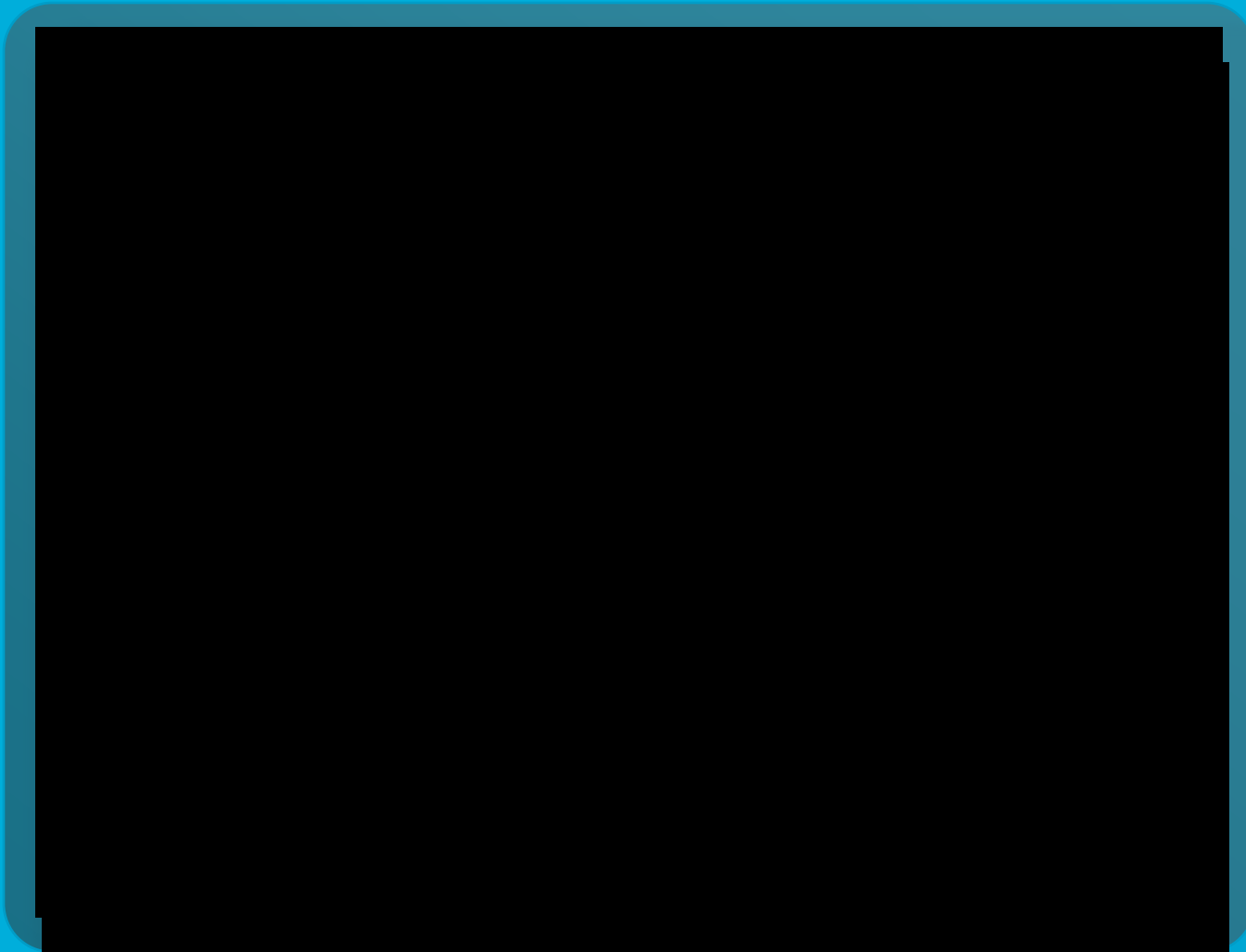
Making it Real...

DEALING WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS

- Brad
- James
- **ELENA**
- Conner



Making it Real... Elena



What's Going on With Elena?

- Is Elena's journal entry true?
 - ◆ Is this typical of Elena's behavior?
 - ◆ Have you noticed changes in Elena?
 - ◆ Are there other things about her that concern you?
- What are the least confrontational ways to contact her guardian?

Talking with At-Risk Students

- LISTEN
 - ◆ Acknowledge feelings in student' s terms
 - ◆ Clarify
 - ◆ Summarize
 - ◆ Validate
- Know Your Limits
 - ◆ To ask about suicide directly?
- Know Your Resources
- Act
- Follow-up



Risk Factors vs. Protective Factors



Protective Factors

- Contact with a caring adult
- Sense of connection or participation in school
- Positive self-esteem and coping skills
- Access to and care for mental / physical / substance disorders



Fostering Protective Factors

- Teach students it is okay to ask for help
- Give students permission to talk about traumatic events like suicide
- Help students identify trusted adults
- Encourage participation in school & community activities
- Acknowledge student efforts
- Be a good listener, as often as you can



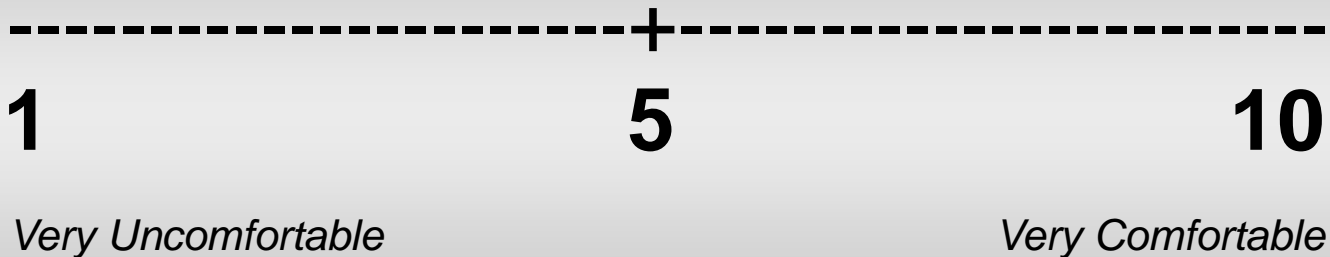
So Here's Your Homework:

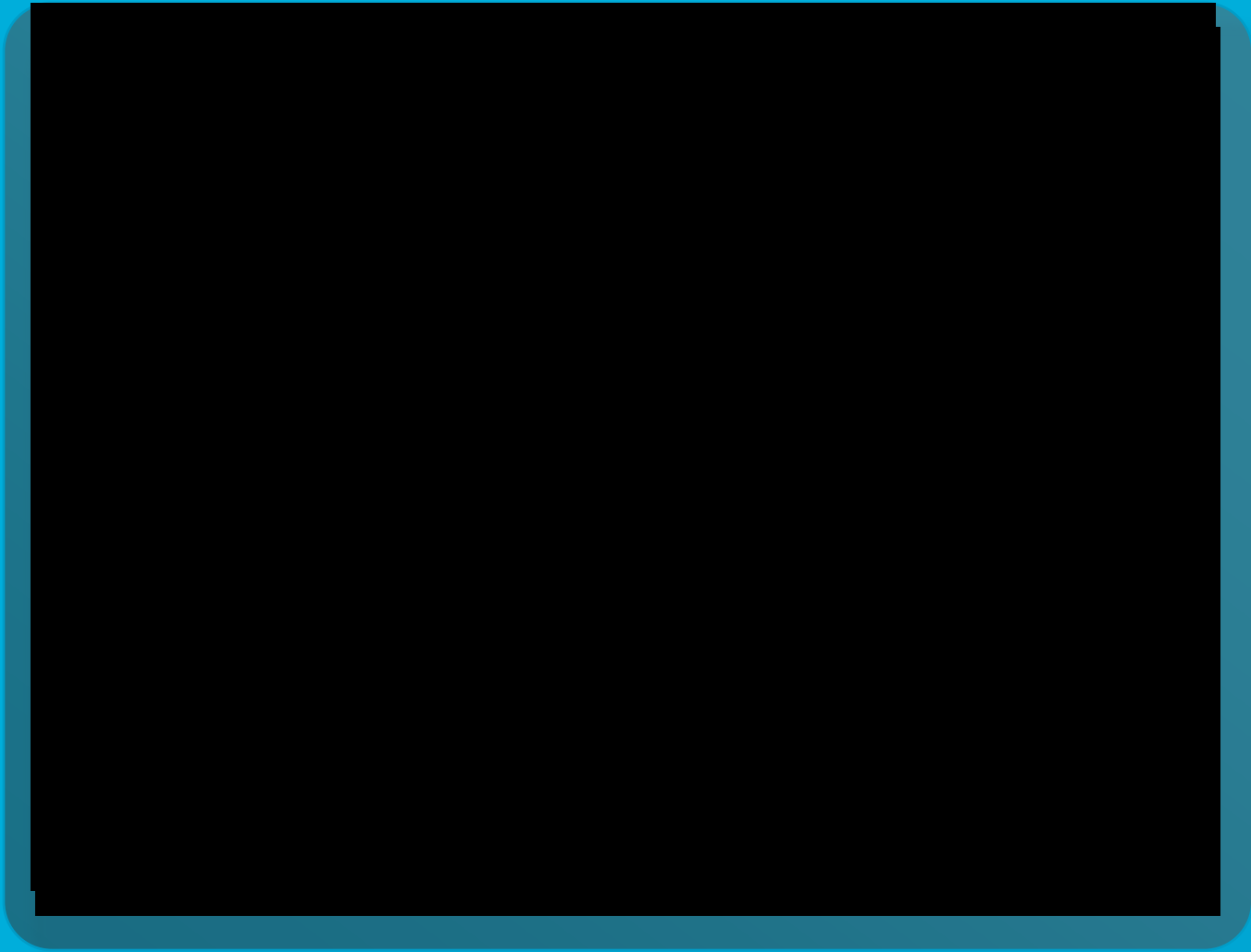
1. Review school policy & procedures
2. Examine personal attitudes and values
3. Consider data
4. Review curriculum for reminders and for ways in which you can foster protective factors (resiliency)
5. Remember your role:
 - **Identify**
 - **Listen**
 - **Refer**



Revisit This Question:

On a 1 to 10 scale, rank how comfortable you are talking about suicide, *now?*





It's in the Shelter of Each Other...



...THAT WE LIVE

Web Resources

- www.sptsusa.org
Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide
Sponsor of this program focuses on resources for the competent school community
- www.sprc.org
Suicide Prevention Resource Center
National Resource
- www.suicidology.org
American Association of Suicidology
Data, resources, links
- <http://theguide.fmhi.usf.edu/>
University of Southern Florida
Downloadable guide for a school suicide prevention program