

COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

**Messaging and Communications to Trusted
Messengers of People Disproportionately
Impacted by Suicide**

Research By:



In Partnership With:



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The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance), housed at EDC, is the public-private partnership working to advance the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and make suicide prevention a national priority. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), through the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) grant, provides funding to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance.

WARNING TO THE READER

This document discusses various experiences that you may find yourself identifying with while reading. Should you need emotional or mental health-related support, please text, call, or chat with 988 or a local trusted support.

Suicide is rarely caused by a single event or circumstance. Many individual, relationship, community, and societal conditions and factors contribute to suicide risk. Some groups experience more negative social conditions and factors related to suicide, such as racism and discrimination, economic hardship, poverty, limited affordable housing, lack of education opportunities, and barriers to physical and mental healthcare access¹. In addition, some groups may have higher or recently increased rates of suicide, suicide attempt, or suicidal ideation than the general U.S. population. These groups may be considered disproportionately impacted by suicide.

In July 2022, the U.S. transitioned from a 10-digit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to 988, an easy-to-remember three-digit number for 24/7 crisis care. Since its inception, 988 has routed over 9.6 million contacts².

Organizations that reach the public—including nonprofits, state and local government entities, and others willing to help—can play a huge role in reaching the most urgent audiences in this effort: people who are at disproportionately impacted by suicide. The Ad Council Research Institute (ACRI) team covered this topic extensively (in both a study and accompanying toolkit) in our 988 Formative Research³, released in late 2023.

The second study and toolkit in this project are focused on the **trusted messengers** that people who are disproportionately impacted by suicide turn to for **trusted, unbiased information and help when they're struggling with their mental health or in crisis**.

The messaging points and resources in this toolkit are based on the latest research gathered from trusted messengers of specific cohorts within the general population. Your organization can confidently use these tools and resources to build awareness and trust in 988 among trusted messengers to people disproportionately impacted by suicide.



**FOR THE FULL RESEARCH STUDY,
REFER TO THE REPORT, 988
SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE:**

**Messaging and Communications to
Trusted Messengers of People at Higher
Risk for or Disproportionately Impacted
by Suicide.**

PURPOSE

The messaging principles and campaign recommendations included in this toolkit are based on research findings from the 988 study on trusted messengers. As a marketer or communicator, you should use this toolkit as a resource as you craft messaging, build campaigns, and test calls to action with trusted messengers of people who are disproportionally impacted by suicide to educate and increase usage of the 988 lifeline.

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/disparities-in-suicide.html#:~:text=The%20excess%20burden%20of%20suicide%20in%20some%20populations%20are%20called%20health%20disparities.&text=Examples%20of%20groups%20experiencing%20suicide,of%20color%2C%20and%20tribal%20populations.>
2. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/performance-metrics>
3. <https://www.adcouncil.org/learn-with-us/ad-council-research-institute/988-suicide-crisis-lifeline-formative-research>

INTENDED AUDIENCES

In the initial 988 Formative Research study, participants indicated that when they're struggling with their mental health or are in crisis, they most often turn to their spouse/partner, mother, siblings, and friends for help and advice. These trusted messengers are also the ones participants said they'd most trust information on 988 from, giving them a vital role in helping encourage, nudge, and influence their loved ones/close connections to seek support through 988.

The 988 messaging described in this toolkit is primarily intended for people who are considered trusted messengers of these populations—that is, the people they most turn to and trust for information about 988: **spouse/partner, mother/caregiver, sibling, friend.**

KEY MESSAGING PRINCIPLES

Our research found that about half of trusted messengers (51% average) have heard about 988, but only a small portion say they're familiar with it or have used it. To overcome this challenge, 988 communications should be crafted in a way that instills trust and confidence and that influences trusted messengers to use the service (for themselves or for their loved ones), or to recommend it to their loved ones/close connections.

Of the trusted messengers who have heard of 988, the majority are aware of it being **available 24/7 and free**; to a lesser degree, trusted messengers have heard that 988 is **helpful, anonymous, and private/confidential.**

After reiterating these points, increasing awareness of 988 and its value needs to delve deeper into providing information about how it can help loved ones and trusted messengers.

After reading about 988, most trusted messengers said it's valuable, though some key information would help increase its value even more—namely:

- What happens when someone calls
- That information shared is confidential
- Personal success stories/knowing who has used it
- More about the trained counselors who work for 988

As such, it's important to include these resources when informing loved ones about 988 to encourage wider use.

The majority of trusted messengers also said they'd consider using or recommending 988 to a loved one/connection if they were struggling with their mental health or in crisis. When it comes to using 988 themselves, most trusted messengers would consider turning to 988 as a resource to learn how to talk about mental health with their loved ones, find additional resources to help, or get support for themselves as a close connection to someone who's struggling.

Trusted messengers are most likely to consider recommending 988 to a loved one/close connection because:

- The counselors at 988 are trained to handle situations with mental health.
- It's best for their loved one/close connection to speak directly to a professional.
- 988 could assist with getting the help they need.

To encourage participation, consider including the above points as part of a website or FAQs section to offer critical information trusted messengers are looking for.

Some key barriers exist, however—mostly in regards to privacy and relationships. Many messengers, primarily friends, are worried they'd be overstepping their loved one's privacy by recommending or using 988 on their behalf, or that their loved one would see it as a breach of trust or damaging to their relationship. Some were also worried law enforcement would get involved as a result, or that responses on the lifeline would be scripted and not authentic.

- **Friends especially are worried that recommending 988 would impact their relationship with their loved one/close connection (they'd be overstepping, it would be a breach of trust, etc.), or are worried law enforcement would be contacted.**
- **Spouses/partners and friends of someone who has experienced suicidal ideation are worried about damaging their relationship, that law enforcement would be called, or that responses would be scripted and not authentic.**
- **Siblings of Hispanic (13-34) loved ones/close connections are worried about credibility and an engagement with law enforcement.**

Because of these differences, marketers and communicators should ensure campaign messaging speaks directly to each group's concerns.

DEEPER INFORMATION:

Roughly half (51%) of all trusted messengers said they've heard of 988, and fewer say they're familiar with it or have used it. Many trusted messengers have questions about 988's specifics, such as what happens when someone calls, how counselors are trained, how credible the service is, and more. Starting messaging with key themes (24/7 access, no cost, confidentiality), as well as specific details about the service will help assuage these concerns to make trusted messengers more likely to put their trust in 988 for their loved ones.

PRIVACY/TRUSTWORTHINESS:

People want to know that 988 counselors will protect their privacy (or that of their loved one), and that conversations are confidential. It's also important that campaign messaging—as well as messaging from 988 counselors themselves—not sound artificial or scripted.

TRAINING:

At 988, all counselors who answer a call/chat/text are trained in crisis response services to provide the support needed no matter the circumstances with empathy and discretion. Many trusted messengers in the study want to ensure that the person on the other end of the line is real (not an automated service), and that they're adequately trained to help them and their loved one get resources and help.

AVAILABILITY:

Overall, trusted messengers in the study who said they're aware of 988 are most familiar with it being available 24/7 and at no cost. Trusted messengers of people who are struggling with mental health want assurance that they can call/text/chat 988 whenever they need someone to talk to, for free (in accordance with state and local regulations/requirements).

SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE

One message about 988 won't fit all. Refer to the end of this toolkit for messaging tips and recommendations specific to each cohort in the study.

In addition to these principles, trusted messengers are looking for resources to support their loved ones in times of struggle or crisis:

- Information on who to contact when someone they know is in crisis.
- How to start a conversation with someone struggling with their mental health.
- How to identify someone struggling with their mental health.
- Information about mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, OCD, etc.
- What to do during a panic attack.
- How to find and choose a mental health therapist.

Campaign messaging that is informative and speaks to these needs will resonate well with trusted messengers.

MESSAGING DO'S AND DON'TS

Use this as a checklist to ensure messaging is on track.

DO
DON'T

Use a natural, personal tone.
Use hyperbole or use clinical or scripted language.

DO
DON'T

Reinforce 24/7 availability for reaching someone who cares about their loved one.
Imply there's ever a "better" time to call.

DO
DON'T

Give everyone struggling with mental health or supporting someone who's struggling the assurance they can call, text, or chat.
Imply that 988 is a last resort or only for dire emergencies.

DO
DON'T

Share 988's benefits for loved ones of people who are struggling.
Put parameters on who should/should not use the lifeline.

DO
DON'T

Stress privacy.
Use ambiguous language about confidentiality.

DO
DON'T

Emphasize that counselors are professional and trained.
Fail to communicate the "human" aspects of a caring, understanding, nonjudgmental person to talk to.

DO
DON'T

Reinforce that counselors are live and always available.
Leave the impression they won't always be able to reach a trained person ready to listen.

DO
DON'T

Educate about 988 and help trusted messengers identify the warning signs of suicide.
Attempt to explain what mental health is or why someone might be depressed, stressed, anxious, etc.

DO
DON'T

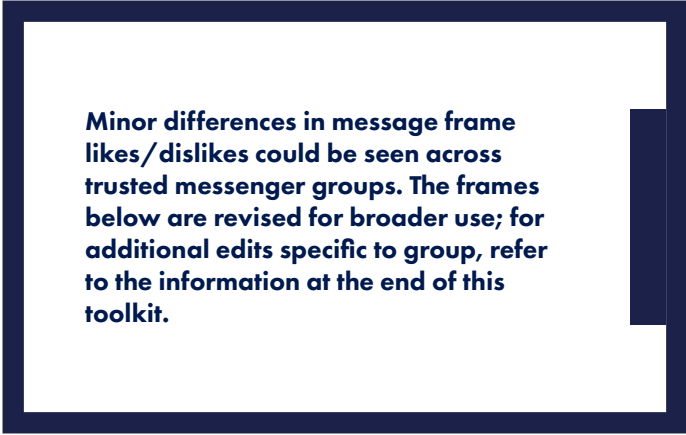
Tailor your message to your audience based on this toolkit.
Assume one message will resonate with everyone who needs to hear it.

CAMPAIGN MESSAGING

Our goal was to determine the key narratives and phrasing that best motivate trusted messengers of people who are disproportionately impacted by suicide to use or recommend 988 when their loved one is struggling with mental health. After determining what would motivate participants, the research team tested specific message frames: a foundational frame to explain what 988 is and does, and supporting conditional frames to help expand upon the definition and overcome potential biases among participants.

Participants were asked if they found each frame helpful in understanding 988, motivating to tell their loved ones/close connections about 988, and whether the addition of conditional frames strengthened the message. They were also asked to highlight key phrases they liked or disliked.

The following message frames are further revisions of the foundational and conditional frames based on in-depth feedback from all research phases in this study.



Minor differences in message frame likes/dislikes could be seen across trusted messenger groups. The frames below are revised for broader use; for additional edits specific to group, refer to the information at the end of this toolkit.

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Life for my sister had become so ... overwhelming. She was stressed all the time, and I could tell she was struggling with her mental health. I'd ask how she was doing, what I could do to support her, how I could help, but she'd always say she was fine, that I wouldn't understand what she was going through.

Finally, I learned about 988 and shared the information with my sister: How she could speak with someone who could actually relate, and who could provide help and resources to help her feel better. For her, 988 was a much-needed first step to feel heard and help share her burden.

If your loved one is feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, they don't know where to turn, or they're questioning if their life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. They'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. All conversations are confidential, and your loved one will feel heard and cared about, and they'll get connected with the support they need.

Tell your loved one to call/text/chat with a 988 counselor. They are ready to listen.

CONDITIONAL FRAMES

Two conditional frames were designed to provide additional information and proactively address biases among participants.

CONDITIONAL FRAME 1: YOU'RE NOT ALONE

When a loved one is struggling with mental health or is in crisis, you may feel like you're the only person who can help them - even if you don't really know what to say or do.

That can feel scary, but you don't have to do it alone.

988 connects people with skilled, compassionate counselors who provide a listening ear and real, confidential mental health support when it's needed most.

You aren't alone, and your loved one isn't, either. Call/text/chat with a 988 counselor - anytime, day or night.

CONDITIONAL FRAME 2: IDENTIFYING CRISIS

If your loved one seems down or like they're struggling - or worse - how do you know when it's serious enough to seek help with or for them? When is it time to seek action?

988 is a free resource for anyone needing to talk about their mental health or whatever they're going through - if they're simply having a hard time, or if they're in crisis.

A 988 counselor is ready to talk - anytime, day or night. Call/text/chat today.

Most participants across trusted messenger groups found the foundational frame extremely/very helpful to their understanding of 988, responding most favorably to phrases describing the narrator's struggle to support their loved one and get them help. As such, communicators should begin with the foundational frame for any audience they seek to build awareness among, and educate about 988 and its core services and benefits.

Overwhelmingly, trusted messengers liked the "You're Not Alone" conditional frame over the "Identifying Crisis" frame. When designing campaigns to reach trusted messenger groups, communicators should include the conditional frame most preferred by that cohort in order to go deeper into messaging, overcome potential biases, and further motivate individuals to use/recommend 988 (tailored to meet local, state, and any organizational regulations and practices).

The following pages of this toolkit provide campaign messaging and strategic recommendations specific to each trusted messenger group included in the study. This information can and should be used by communicators to craft more effective and personalized campaigns to individual audiences.

SPOUSES/PARTNERS

AWARENESS

Just over half of spouses/partners say they've heard of 988 before, but most are not familiar with it. Spouses/partners of older rural men (49+) are even less likely to be aware of it, compared to spouses/partners of other populations.

Spouses/partners aware of 988 do not have a strong grasp of what it does.

Many know it's available 24/7, followed by it being free. Fewer say it's helpful, private/confidential, available instantly via multiple platforms, and anonymous.

Nearly all believe 988 is valuable. To make it more valuable with spouses/partners, messaging could include personal testimonials and more information about the process (including that it's confidential) and counselors.

Spouses/partners of older rural men (49+) are less likely than others to find value in personal success stories, or if 988 was endorsed by someone they trust or featured in an ad/on social media. They're more likely, however, to find value in 988 being featured in/on the news they rely on, which could be a key consideration for marketing to this group.

USAGE & INTENTIONS

Most trusted messengers are open to using 988 as a resource to support their spouse/partner, with most looking to learn how to best support and talk to them, as well as wanting resources for themselves. Spouses/partners of older rural men (49+) are more hesitant to use 988 as a resource, but most are still open to it.

Of the minority who wouldn't recommend 988, barriers vary:

Spouses/partners of people who identify as LGBTQIA+, people who have experienced suicidal ideation, and people with disabilities are especially concerned about damaging the relationship and compromising their spouse/partner's privacy.

Some trusted messengers would like to understand what happens with the information that's shared during a call, including confirmation that it's confidential (especially for spouses/partners of a person who's Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander) and understanding if/when outside services are brought in.

MESSAGING LIKES & DISLIKES

Most spouses/partners found the foundational frame helpful to understanding the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

LIKES

- How 988 works
- 24/7 availability
- Confidentiality
- Knowing someone relatable is there
- Acknowledgement that 988 is a step in the process

DISLIKES/CONCERNS

- Language that relates to the loved one's signs and symptoms (anxious, overwhelmed)
- Responses might be scripted or not personalized
- Afraid it would damage the relationship or overstep privacy

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Many spouses/partners liked the opening line of the foundational frame, though some disliked portions of the first paragraph. The frame below includes minor edits from the foundational frame for the broader public shared earlier in this toolkit. Bolded statements indicate what this audience especially liked about this frame.

Life for my husband had become so ... overwhelming. I started to really struggle with **what I could do to support him, how I could help**, but he'd always say he was fine, that I wouldn't understand what he was going through.

Finally, I learned about 988 and shared the information with my husband: **How he could speak with someone who could actually relate**, and who could provide help and resources to help him feel better. **For him, 988 was a much-needed first step** to feel heard and help share his burden.

If your loved one is feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, they don't know where to turn, or they're questioning if their life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. **They'll get one-on-one support** from a skilled, compassionate counselor, **24/7. All conversations are confidential**, and your loved one will feel heard and cared about, and they'll get connected with the support they need.

Tell your loved one to call/text/chat with a 988 counselor. They are ready to listen.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Spouses/partners rated the "You're Not Alone" conditional frame higher than the "Identifying Crisis" frame for improving the foundational frame and motivating them to recommend 988 to their loved one. Spouses/partners of an Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander person were even more likely to resonate with "You're Not Alone" than other populations.

When a loved one is struggling with mental health or is in crisis, you may feel like you're the only person who can help them - even if you don't really know what to say or do.

That can feel scary, but you don't have to do it alone.

988 connects people with skilled, compassionate counselors who provide a listening ear and real, confidential mental health support when it's needed most.

You aren't alone, and your loved one isn't, either. Call/text/chat with a 988 counselor - anytime, day or night.

MOTHERS/CAREGIVERS

AWARENESS

Just under half of mothers/caregivers say they've heard of 988 before, and most are not familiar with it.

Mothers/caregivers aware of 988 do not have a strong grasp of what it does.

Many know it's available 24/7, followed by it being free. Fewer say it's helpful, private/confidential, available instantly via multiple platforms, and anonymous.

Nearly all believe 988 is valuable. To make it more valuable with mothers/caregivers, messaging could include more information about the process (including that it's confidential) and the counselors, and could include personal testimonials.

USAGE & INTENTIONS

Most mothers/caregivers are open to using 988 as a resource to support their child, with most looking to learn how to best support and talk to them, as well as wanting resources for themselves. While most are still open to using 988, about a quarter of mothers/caregivers are more hesitant to use it as a resource, especially mothers/caregivers of Black/African American or American Indian/Alaska Native children.

Barriers to mothers/caregivers who wouldn't recommend the lifeline include:

Fear of overstepping or breaching trust (especially for mothers/caregivers of children who have experienced suicidal ideation).

A lack of knowledge or skepticism about 988's credibility.

MESSAGING LIKES & DISLIKES

Most mothers/caregivers found the foundational frame helpful to understanding the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, though slightly less among mothers/caregivers to American Indian/Alaska Native children.

LIKES

- How 988 works
- 24/7 availability
- One-on-one support
- Confidentiality
- Knowing someone relatable is there
- Acknowledgement that 988 is a step in the process

DISLIKES/CONCERNS

- Privacy/confidentiality
- Language that relates to the loved one's signs and symptoms (anxious, overwhelmed)

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Some portions of the opening two paragraphs were disliked among mothers/caregivers, but not enough for the research team to recommend omitting them entirely. The frame below includes minor edits from the foundational frame for the broader public shared earlier in this toolkit. Bolded statements indicate what this audience especially liked about this frame.

Life for my daughter had become so ... overwhelming. She was stressed all the time, incredibly anxious. I'd ask how she was doing, **what I could do to support her**, how I could help, but she'd just say she was fine, or that I wouldn't understand what she was going through.

Finally, I learned about 988 and shared the information with my daughter: **How she could speak with someone who could actually relate, and who could provide help** and resources to help her feel better. **For her, 988 was a much-needed first step** to feel heard and help share her burden.

If your loved one is feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, they don't know where to turn, or they're questioning if their life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. **They'll get one-on-one support** from a skilled, **compassionate counselor, 24/7. All conversations are confidential**, and your loved one will feel heard and cared about, and they'll get connected with the support they need.

Tell your loved one to call/text/chat with a 988 counselor. They are ready to listen.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Mothers/caregivers were more motivated by the "You're Not Alone" conditional frame. They particularly gravitated toward the message that they are not the only resource, and that help is out there for them and their child.

When a loved one is struggling with mental health or is in crisis, you may feel like you're the only person who can help them - even if you don't really know what to say or do.

That can feel scary, but you don't have to do it alone.

988 connects people with skilled, compassionate counselors who provide a listening ear and real, confidential mental health support when it's needed most.

You aren't alone, and your loved one isn't, either. Call/text/chat with a 988 counselor - anytime, day or night.

SIBLINGS

AWARENESS

About half of siblings say they've heard of 988 before, but most are not familiar with it. Siblings of older rural men (49+) are even less likely to be aware of it, compared to other populations.

Siblings aware of 988 do not have a strong grasp of what it does.

Many know it's available 24/7, followed by it being free. Fewer say it's anonymous, helpful, private/confidential, and available instantly via multiple platforms.

Nearly all believe 988 is valuable. To make it more valuable with siblings, messaging could include more information about the process (including that it's confidential) and the counselors, and could include personal testimonials.

USAGE & INTENTIONS

Most siblings are open to using 988 as a resource to support their loved one, and are looking to learn how to best support and talk to them as well as wanting resources for themselves. In addition, siblings of older rural men 49+, people who have experienced suicidal ideation, and people with disabilities identified that they know they can't support their sibling alone.

While most are still open to using 988, about a quarter of siblings to older rural men 49+ are hesitant to use it as a resource for themselves to get more information.

Barriers to siblings who wouldn't recommend 988 include:

Fear of overstepping, compromising privacy, or breaching trust (especially for siblings of people who have experienced suicidal ideation).

A lack of knowledge about the lifeline in general (especially for siblings of older rural men 49+).

Fear of law enforcement getting involved (especially for siblings of people who are Hispanic, LGBTQIA+, have experienced suicidal ideation, or have a disability).

MESSAGING LIKES & DISLIKES

Most siblings found the foundational frame helpful to understanding the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

LIKES

- How 988 works
- 24/7 availability
- Confidentiality
- Knowing someone relatable is there
- Acknowledgement that 988 is a step in the process

DISLIKES/CONCERNS

- Privacy/confidentiality
- Language that relates to the loved one's signs and symptoms (anxious, overwhelmed)
- Afraid it would damage the relationship or overstep privacy

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Some portions of the opening two paragraphs were slightly disliked or found to be polarizing among siblings, but not enough for the research team to recommend omitting them entirely. The frame below includes minor edits from the foundational frame for the broader public shared earlier in this toolkit. Bolded statements indicate what this audience especially liked about this frame.

Life for my sister had become so ... overwhelming. She was stressed all the time, incredibly anxious. I'd ask how she was doing, **what I could do to support her, how I could help**, but she'd always just shrug me off, saying she was fine, that I wouldn't understand what she was going through.

Finally, I learned about 988 and shared the information with my sister: **How she could speak with someone who could actually relate, and who could provide help and resources to help** her feel better. **For her, 988 was a much-needed first step to feel heard and help share her burden.**

If your loved one is feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, they don't know where to turn, or they're questioning if their life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. **They'll get one-on-one support** from a skilled, **compassionate counselor, 24/7. All conversations are confidential**, and your loved one will feel heard and cared about, and they'll get connected with the support they need.

Tell your loved one to call/text/chat with a 988 counselor. They are ready to listen.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Siblings were most motivated by the "You're Not Alone" conditional frame, particularly liking the frame's reassurances in the process and offer of support.

When a loved one is struggling with mental health or is in crisis, you may feel like you're the only person who can help them - even if you don't really know what to say or do.

That can feel scary, but you don't have to do it alone.

988 connects people with skilled, compassionate counselors who provide a listening ear and real, confidential mental health support when it's needed most.

You aren't alone, and your loved one isn't, either. Call/text/chat with a 988 counselor - anytime, day or night.

FRIENDS

AWARENESS

About half of friends say they've heard of 988 before, but few are familiar with it (more so among friends of people who are LGBTQIA+, have experienced suicidal ideation, or have a disability). Friends of older rural men (49+) are even less likely to be aware of it, compared to other populations.

Friends who are aware of 988 do not have a strong grasp of what it does.

Many know it's available 24/7, followed by it being free. Just under half say it's anonymous, helpful, and private/confidential, and fewer say there's a real person on the other end that can be accessed instantly.

Nearly all believe 988 is valuable. To make it more valuable among friends, messaging could include more information about the process (including that it's confidential) and the counselors, and could include personal testimonials.

Friends of people who have experienced suicidal ideation are more likely than other cohorts to be interested in knowing who/what organizations fund 988, while friends of Black/African American people are less likely to want to know this. Friends of older rural men (49+) are less likely than others to find value in 988 being featured in an ad/on social media.

USAGE & INTENTIONS

Most friends are open to using 988 as a resource to support their loved one and are looking to learn how to best support and talk to them, as well as wanting resources for themselves. However, friends of a person with a disability or who is American Indian/Alaska Native are a bit more hesitant to use 988 than other groups.

Barriers to friends who wouldn't recommend 988 include:

Fear of overstepping, compromising privacy, breaching trust, or law enforcement involvement (especially for friends of people who have experienced suicidal ideation).

A lack of knowledge about the lifeline in general (especially for friends of older rural men 49+).

MESSAGING LIKES & DISLIKES

Most friends found the foundational frame helpful to understanding the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

LIKES

- How 988 works
- 24/7 availability
- Confidentiality
- Knowing someone relatable and compassionate is there
- Acknowledgement that 988 is a step in the process

DISLIKES/CONCERNS

- Privacy/confidentiality
- Language that relates to the loved one's signs and symptoms (anxious, overwhelmed)
- Afraid it would damage the relationship or overstep privacy

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Some portions of the opening two paragraphs were slightly disliked or found to be polarizing among friends, but not enough for the research team to recommend omitting them entirely. The frame below includes minor edits from the foundational frame shared earlier in this toolkit (for the broader public). Bolded statements indicate what this audience especially liked about this frame.

Life for my friend had become so ... overwhelming. He was stressed all the time, incredibly anxious. I'd ask how he was doing, what I could do to support him, how I could help, but he'd always just shrug me off, saying he was fine, that I wouldn't understand what he was going through.

Finally, I learned about 988 and shared the information with my friend: **How he could speak with someone who could actually relate, and who could provide help** and resources **to help him feel better. For him, 988 was a much-needed first step to feel heard and help share his burden.**

If your loved one is feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, they don't know where to turn, or they're questioning if their life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. **They'll get one-on-one support** from a skilled, **compassionate** counselor, **24/7. All conversations are confidential**, and your loved one will feel heard and cared about, and **they'll get connected with the support they need.**

Tell your loved one to call/text/chat with a 988 counselor. They are ready to listen.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE:

YOU'RE NOT ALONE
(ALL FRIENDS)

YOU'RE NOT ALONE OR IDENTIFYING CRISIS
(FRIENDS OF OLDER RURAL MEN 49+)

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

When a loved one is struggling with mental health or is in crisis, you may feel like you're the only person who can help them - even if you don't really know what to say or do.

That can feel scary, but you don't have to do it alone.

988 connects people with skilled, compassionate counselors who provide a listening ear and real, confidential mental health support when it's needed most.

You aren't alone, and your loved one isn't, either. Call/text/chat with a 988 counselor - anytime, day or night.

IDENTIFYING CRISIS *[an option for friends of older rural men 49+]*

If your loved one seems down or like they're struggling - or worse - how do you know when it's serious enough to seek help with or for them? When is it time to seek action?

988 is a free resource for anyone needing to talk about their mental health or whatever they're going through - if they're simply having a hard time, or if they're in crisis.

A 988 counselor is ready to talk - anytime, day or night. Call/text/chat today.