

STATEMENT

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Nation's Leading Suicide Prevention Organization Warns Parents about Social Media Game that Increases Risk of Suicide

NEW YORK (JULY 17, 2017) – A new, dangerous online game referred to as the Blue Whale Challenge is reaching young people and causing harm, first abroad and now in the United States. Over the course of several weeks, an anonymous administrator assigns participants tasks. The Challenge starts with small tasks like watching a scary video, and becomes increasingly more dangerous to include things like self-harming. For the final task, the participant is asked to take their own life. The game has been reaching young people through social media – YouTube, Snapchat, and Facebook.

In an effort to inform and support youth caregivers, we offer school administrators, teachers, and parents some helpful tools and resources for navigating this subject matter with a youth audience.

If you are concerned about a young person, individual or family member who may be vulnerable, here are some immediate steps you can take:

- Unless there is reason to believe your child already knows of or has played the game, don't bring up the Blue Whale Game. By doing so, you increase the chance that your child will investigate it on their own.
- Do check in with your child, ask how things are going. Ask if there have been things stressing them, or anything that has them worried. Steady yourself to listen intently. Ask open-ended questions without judgment. Resist the urge to offer quick fixes to a situation they may be facing. Validate and support their feelings. Follow their cues. If your child is talking about any level of distress, do not hesitate to ask them about changes in mental health or suicidal thoughts. It can start with asking "Are you OK?" Watch this [video](#).
- Monitor your children's online and social media activity to ensure they are not engaging with this game.
- As a way to open the conversation about coping strategies, ask your child if any of their friends or classmates have faced challenges or are exhibiting [warning signs](#). Ask how their friends have coped as a way to open the conversation around healthy coping strategies.
- If you fear your child may be at risk, get professional help right away. For help finding a mental health professional, visit afsp.org/findaprofessional. If in crisis, please call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or contact the **Crisis Text Line** by texting TALK to **741-741**.
- Remind your child that you are there and will support them as they face life challenges.

For Media Partners

AFSP encourages journalists to **NOT write or produce stories** about this social media game in order to avoid contagion. Research shows that the media may influence suicide rates by the way they report on suicide. Evidence suggests that when the media tells stories of people positively coping with their struggles, more suicides can be prevented. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to the Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide for best practices for safely and accurately reporting on suicide. Media interested in learning more information regarding suicide, how to report on suicide, and warning signs can visit: <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/for-journalists/>.

[The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health through education and community programs, develops suicide prevention through research and advocacy, and provides support for those affected by suicide. Led by CEO [Robert Gebbia](#) and headquartered in New York, AFSP has [local chapters](#) in all 50 states with programs and events nationwide. AFSP celebrates 30 years of service to the suicide prevention movement. Learn more about AFSP in its latest [Annual Report](#), and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following AFSP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).