

# Real Stories from Colorado Youth Discussion Guide

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## ABOUT COLORADO CRISIS SERVICES

Colorado Crisis Services is Colorado's first statewide resource for mental health, substance use or emotional crisis help, information and referrals. It was formed as a part of the initiative set forth by former Gov. John Hickenlooper, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services, to strengthen Colorado's mental health system. Its purpose is to provide greater access to mental health services, ensuring Coloradans get the right services in the right locations at the right time.

If you don't know where to begin getting mental health, substance use or emotional help for yourself or someone you know, start here. Colorado Crisis Services provides confidential and immediate support, 24/7/365 on the phone, text, chat, or in person at our walk-in centers.

When you call Colorado Crisis Services, you will be connected to a crisis counselor—a trained professional with a minimum of a master's degree in the behavioral health field—or you can elect to speak to a trained peer specialist who has gone through similar experiences. We offer translation services for non-English speakers, we engage in immediate problem solving, and we make follow-up calls to ensure you receive continued care. Learn more at [ColoradoCrisisServices.org](https://ColoradoCrisisServices.org).

## ABOUT BELOW THE SURFACE

Below the Surface is an awareness campaign supported by the Colorado Department of Human Services that aims to help teens connect to and get support from the Colorado Crisis Services text line. This text line allows anyone to text 24/7 with a trained counselor on a personal, free, confidential line. The campaign's focus on text meets teens where they are.

Messaging for Below the Surface was derived from a group of Colorado teens in El Paso County who came together after their community experienced a succession of youth suicides to describe how fine the line is between being "OK" and "not OK." They explained that on the surface someone may appear to be OK and doing great, but sometimes their true feelings are quite the opposite and pressure or crisis may be bubbling just below the surface. The messages are meant to help youth who may be navigating academic and social pressures, bullying and harassment, depression and anxiety, family instability, substance abuse, identifying as LGBTQIA+, relationship issues, and more.

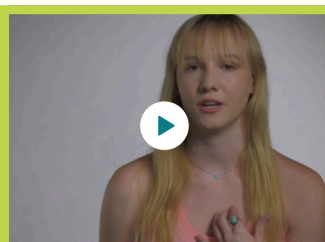
Below the Surface is built on the premise that speaking with a real person, trained to provide help, can make a real difference for a struggling young person. The messaging, created by and tested with youth, tries to reassure young adults that it's OK to ask for help, no one dealing with a mental health challenge is alone, and regardless of how big or small the challenge is, there is a trustworthy resource to turn to. Learn more at [BelowTheSurfaceCO.com](https://BelowTheSurfaceCO.com).



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## ABOUT THE BELOW THE SURFACE PSA VIDEOS

The Colorado Department of Human Services was proud to support a series of public service announcements featuring Colorado youth encouraging peers to connect to free, anonymous, confidential, and always-available mental health professional support via the Colorado Crisis Services text line. The PSAs are part of its Below the Surface campaign and may be viewed at [BelowTheSurfaceCO.com](https://www.belowthesurfaceco.com). Colorado Crisis Services has created the following suggested discussion guide for anyone wishing to use these videos for meetings/events on the topic of youth suicide prevention, mental health awareness, etc.



### Video #1 (How Colorado Crisis Services Helped Alex)

If you were Alex's friend or family member, how would you begin a conversation with her about what she might be going through?

If Alex confided in you about her struggles, how would you react?

Do you know the resources available to you to help support Alex?

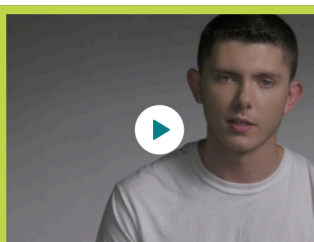


### Video #2 (You Are Not Alone: Hear from others like you)

What are some coping mechanisms that can help you out when things get tough?

Make a list of trusted individuals whom you can reach out to in hard times. What would you tell them when you reached out?

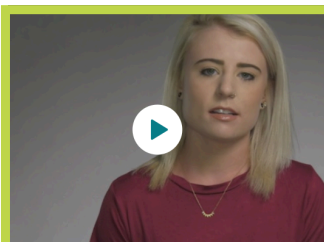
How can we as a community work to destigmatize mental health and encourage honest conversations around our struggles?



### Video #3 (Stephen Opens Up About Anxiety)

What are some of the warning signs that Stephen mentions that indicated he was struggling with depression and anxiety? Are there other warning signs we should be aware of?

What should you do if you notice a friend or family member is displaying some of the warning signs?



### Video #4 (Zoe's Promise to Her Sister)

What are the mental health resources in your school and community and how can you raise awareness of those resources so people know where to get help?

Are there ways that your school or community can raise awareness of Colorado Crisis Services as an additional resource for those who may feel alone?

## Other Questions

What would you do if someone you know started talking about suicide? If they're not talking about it directly, what are some warning signs that they may be experiencing suicidal thoughts?



**COLORADO**  
Department of Human Services

