



## SOS for Middle School Refresher 2 & Screening Instructions

### Lesson Introduction

"Today we are going to be learning about suicide prevention. Many of you participated in SOS in the past. Today we will be watching a refresher video from the main lesson and a new video featuring a student talking about his struggles with depression and suicide and his path to getting help.

This can be a difficult topic to talk about but it's important to learn how we can help each other. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the lesson [\[insert school plan for students who need a break\]](#).

*(Continue reading except for end-of-day classes\*\*)*

At the end of the class, we will be asking you to complete a brief survey where you will be answering some questions about how you have been feeling over the past month. You will also have an opportunity to indicate if you would like to speak to an adult privately about any questions or concerns that you may have about yourself and/or a friend/peer."

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**\*\*NOTE: For classes being facilitated the last 1-2 periods of the school day (pre-determined by your school's SOS Team), students should be directed to complete the survey *before* the SOS lesson.**

### Directions for End-of-Day Classes:

**\*\*Read the directions to students before passing out the forms! Let students know that they should turn their paper over when they finish, and you will collect it from them. Do NOT have students pass papers forward or deposit in a pile!**

"Today we will be viewing and discussing the SOS Middle School Program videos. Before we start, I am going to pass out a brief survey. Please write your first and last name legibly at the top, and then answer the seven yes-or-no questions to the best of your ability. All but one question asks you to think about how you have been feeling over the **past 4 weeks**, *not* just how you are feeling today, or even how you were feeling two summers ago or last school year, just how you've been feeling over the past month. Next, think of trusted adults both at home and at school, and complete this portion of the survey. If your trusted adult at home is a relative (mom, grandma, uncle, etc.) you can write their title as opposed to their name. For school, please specify a particular person (don't just write "teacher" or "counselor").

In our discussion today we will be talking about the importance of the ACT help-seeking message. I want to give you an opportunity right now to request to speak to an adult at the school about concerns that you may have about yourself or a friend. Please fill in the appropriate bubble on the bottom of the form indicating whether or not you would like to talk to someone. Your choices are 1) I would like to talk to someone today, because it is an emergency, 2) I would like to talk to an adult one day this week—it is not an emergency, or 3) I do not need to talk to an adult at this time. Just fill in one of the three bubbles. I know we have not gone through the lesson yet, so just make a choice based on how you feel right now. If your answer changes by the end of the lesson, please notify me at the end of the class period."

## Video 1 Introduction

“In the first video, we will review a scene with two students, Kennedy and Bella. Pay attention to the signs Kennedy noticed and think about what you would do if you saw these signs in a friend.”

## Show First Video & Guide Class Discussion

### Optional Question:

**Before moving into the PowerPoint, we recommend you start with the following prompt:  
What is the difference between sadness and depression?**

**Sadness** is a common reaction to bad news or something negative in your life. Feelings of sadness are temporary and often go away on their own. We can also help minimize sad feelings by doing something to help take our minds off whatever is bringing us down (e.g., talking to a friend, listening to music, playing sports, etc.). When people are sad, they can still go on with their daily lives.

**Depression**, however, is a serious health condition that affects more than just your mood. It can impact *all areas* of your life (e.g., eating and sleeping habits, energy level, interest in activities, academic performance, concentration, decision-making, etc.) and prevent you from doing the things that were once important to you. Depression is an *illness* and therefore requires treatment from a qualified doctor or mental health professional. Without treatment, it can even lead to thoughts of suicide. It is essential to get treatment to feel better.

### **Q1: The school counselor says to trust your gut if you are worried about a friend. What signs might tell you something is wrong?**

Encourage students to share any sign that might cause them concern for a friend's wellbeing.

Examples may include:

- Major changes in behavior
- Not acting like themselves
- Acting distant, no longer socializing
- Changes in appearance
- Stopping activities or missing school
- Talking about suicide

### **Q2: What steps do the students say you must take if you are worried about a friend?**

You must ACT. Acknowledge the signs of suicide in a friend, show your friend you Care, and Tell a trusted adult.

Encourage students to discuss how they would use the ACT steps.

## Video 2 Introduction

“In the next video, we will hear from Connor who talks about his struggle with depression and suicide and his path to recovery. You will hear about Connor's friend who ACTed to get him help in eighth grade.”

## Show Second Video & Guide Class Discussion

### Q3: How does Connor describe what depression felt like for him?

- Felt drained and extremely down.
- Wouldn't do schoolwork.
- Didn't want to talk to anybody and felt alone, even with friends.
- Didn't feel like he was good enough, felt like he didn't matter.
- Started hating himself.
- Started to think about suicide.

### Q4: How did Connor's girlfriend know she needed to ACT?

He told her he was thinking about suicide.

Students may be surprised that Connor told his girlfriend that he was thinking about suicide, but it is common for people who are struggling to talk about death or suicide. Sometimes people think the person is just joking or being dramatic. All students and adults should take talk of suicide seriously.

*Reinforce to students that when someone is talking about suicide, it shows that they have been thinking about it and we don't know if or when they may act on those thoughts. It is the number one sign that someone needs help and that you need to ACT. Never leave anyone alone who is talking about suicide.*

### Q5: What helped Connor feel better?

- He talked to his school counselor and realized how serious his feelings were.
- He started therapy. He says that it was awkward at first, but it really helped him feel better to talk about it.
- He told the truth about how he was really feeling on social media, and it felt good for him to stop hiding his pain.
- He learned how to focus on things he loves like music, playing guitar, and theater to help him cope."

#### Optional Question:

#### How can you help a friend who is struggling like Connor was?

You can ACT. You can acknowledge that your friend is going through something very difficult, show them how much you care about them, and tell a trusted adult.

Encourage students to share how they would ACT to help a friend like Connor.

## Video Review

**Allow time for students to ask any additional questions. Remind students of resources available on and off campus. Reinforce the ACT help-seeking message and ensure that students can name the three steps (Acknowledge, Care and Tell).**

## Depression Screening Introduction

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