

Media and Youth Suicide:
Through the Lens of THIRTEEN REASONS WHY

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Disclosures

- No relevant financial disclosures

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Agenda

1. THIRTEEN REASONS WHY as a case study
 - Why so controversial?
 - What do we know from the research?
 - What was the response?
2. What can we learn from this?
 - Reimagining media and mental health
3. Wrap-up and Q&A

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify key components of safe and effective media relevant to protecting individuals at risk for suicide contagion
2. Access high-quality resources that promote open dialogues on sensitive topics without inadvertently placing youth at risk
3. Explore options for advocacy that could reimagine media as a method to destigmatize and enhance mental health awareness

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THIRTEEN REASONS WHY



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The 13RW Controversy



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The 13RW Case Study



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THIRTEEN REASONS WHY – SEASON 1



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What did 13RW do well?

- Compelling to teens
- Captured the attention of millions
- Brings awareness about how interpersonal behaviors may negatively impact others
- Platform to discuss sensitive topics
i.e., youth suicide, sexual violence, traumatic grief, abortion, violence, bullying, addiction

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Concerning Content – 13RW¹

- Dramatized depiction of a teen **SUICIDE**
 - 3 minute scene that ignored all media guidelines



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Concern for Suicide Contagion - 13RW¹

- Dramatic portrayals of suicide on screen can increase subsequent risk of suicide and attempts
 - Using the **same method**
 - Usually within the first **2 weeks** of exposure
 - Occurs in a **dose-specific** fashion
 - **Amplified** in the absence of mental health info
 - **Increased risk** for individuals who:
 - identify with the suicide decedent
 - have pre-existing vulnerabilities

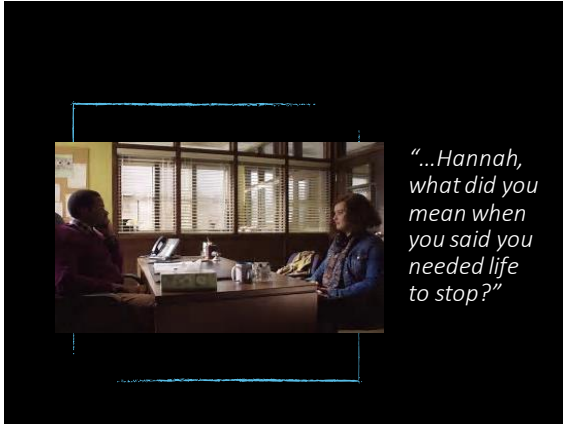
(Gould, 2003; Ladwig et al, 2012)

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Other Concerning Content – 13RW¹

- **Sexual health** depicted problematically
- **Peer victimization** (sexual and physical)
- **Missed opportunities**
 - Scant mental health information
 - Few depressive symptoms
 - Limited help-seeking
 - Adults depicted as incapable of understanding

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18th Century Concepts

(-) "Werther Effect"

- Sociological term used to describe suicide contagion
- After Goethe's 1774 novel "The Sorrows of Young Werther"


(+) "Papageno Effect"

- Protective effect when alternative options to suicide are presented
- After Mozart's 1791 opera "The Magic Flute"

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Media Guidelines for Suicide - 13RW¹

The series failed to connect suicidality with treatable mental illness and ignored existing **media guidelines:**



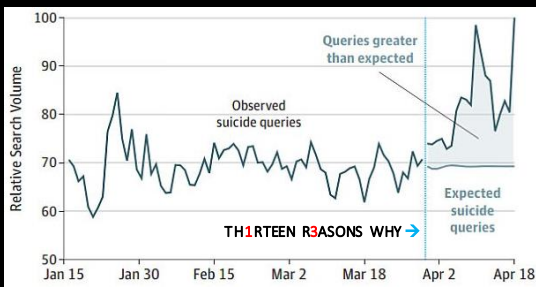
- Media (<http://reportingonsuicide.org>)
- Prevention (<http://suicidepreventionmessaging.org>)
- Postvention (<http://www.sprc.org>)

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What did the early research tell us about 13RW?

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Daily trend for Google searches with the term "suicide" following 13RW¹ release



Ayes JW, Althouse BM, Leis EC, Dredze M, Allem JP. Internet searches for suicide following the release of 13 Reasons Why. JAMA Intern Med. 2017;177(10):1527-1529.

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Increase in Pediatric ED Visits following 13RW¹ release

- Feuer, 2017
 - 40% of ED sites surveyed reported 13RW copycat gestures or attempts in the first month
- Salo, 2017
 - Increase in teens presenting to the ED (94 vs 68) in the 41-days following 13RW release

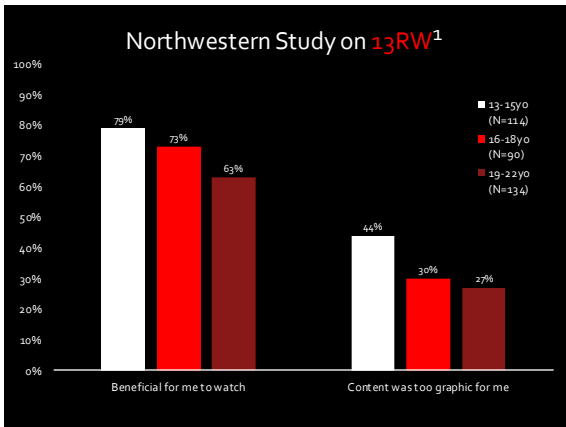
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Northwestern Study on 13RW¹

- Online national survey of 1700 individuals
 - Parents (203 viewers)
 - Teens ages 13-17 (219 viewers)
 - Young adults ages 18-22 (252 viewers)

(Wartella, 2018)

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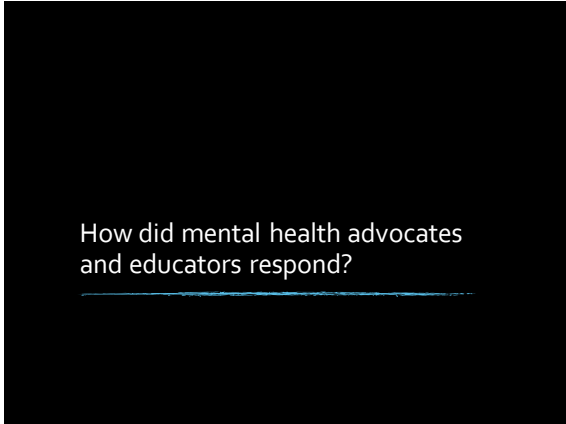


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Northwestern Study on 13RW¹

- Limitations
 - Doesn't capture high-risk youth
 - "Understanding" may represent "misunderstanding"
- 13RW viewers in this survey requested:
 - Cast to come out of character at the end
 - Info on how to help those who may be suffering
 - Mental health professionals to provide resources

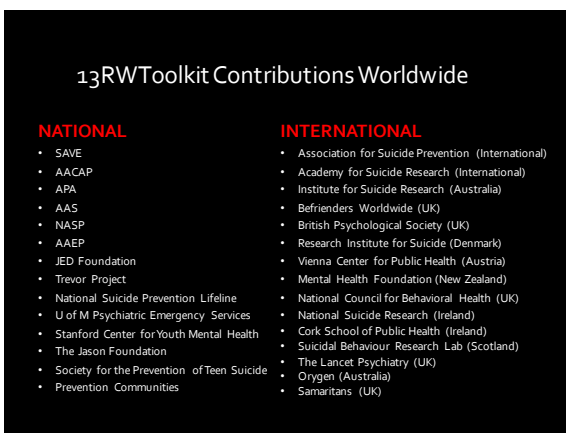
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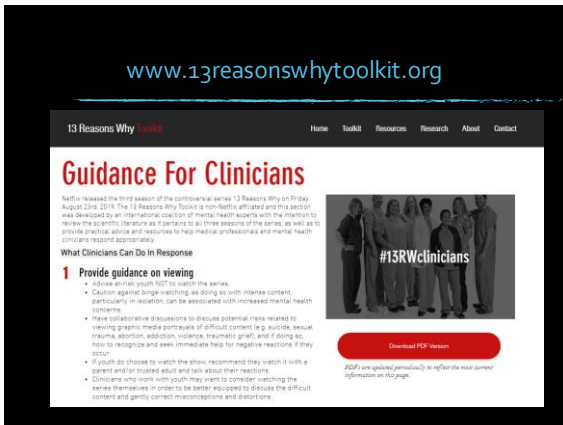
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Netflix response for 13RW²

- **Enhanced Warnings**
 - Actors come out of character
 - Warn those who are struggling not to watch or to watch with a trusted adult
 - Urges "reach out for help" and "talk to someone"
- Netflix website with mental health resources and *Beyond the Reasons* video

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Where Netflix improved – 13RW²

- Method of **alternate ending**
 - i.e. last scene with Hannah and Mr. Porter
- Definition of **mental health terms**
 - e.g. "safety plan" and "consent"
- Portrayal of **symptoms**
 - e.g. trauma triggers with Jessica


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Hannah & Mr. Porter – Alternate Ending

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Concerning Content – 13RW²

- Dramatized depiction of **SEXUAL VIOLENCE**
- Prominent theme of **SCHOOL SHOOTING**
- Other:
 - Unrealistic depiction of suicide attempt
 - Confusing depiction of trusted adults
 - Unclear messaging around sexual health
 - Hollywood style mental health care



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In the meantime, more **13RW** research was being published...

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Survey of suicidal youth in the ED

- Half watched at least 1 episode of 13RW¹
 - **84%** watched alone and discussed with:
 - a peer (80%)
 - parent (34%)
 - teacher/counselor (1%)
 - no one (16%)
 - **51%** believed it increased their own suicide risk

Hong (Psychiatric Services 2019)

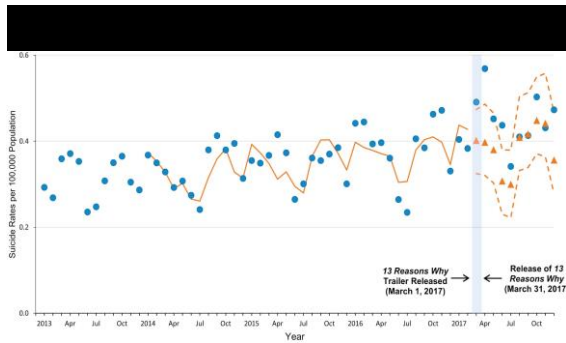
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Analysis of CDC data

- **28.9%** increase in completed suicide among U.S. youth ages 10-17 in the month (April 2017) following the release of 13RW²

Bridge (JAACAP 2019)

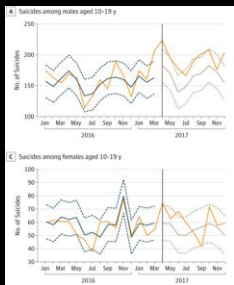
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195 suicides more than expected in youth (ages 10-17) in the nine months following the release of the first season of 13RW

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Another population study



- **13.3%** increase in suicide rates among U.S. youth aged 10-19 in the 3 months following the release (95% CI: 5.5%-21.1%)
 - **21.7%** increase among girls
 - **12.4%** increase among boys
- **94** more teens died by suicide than expected in those 3 months using CDC historical trends

Niederkrotenthaler (JAMA Psychiatry 2019)

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How did Netflix respond?

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Response in the summer of 2019

Netflix removed the graphic depiction of Hannah's suicide from the streaming version of season 1

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THIRTEEN REASONS WHY – SEASON 3



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Content to be aware of – 13RW³

"SURVIVORSHIP & DISCLOSURE"

- VIOLENCE including HOMICIDE
- SEXUAL TRAUMA
- TRAUMATIC GRIEF and loss including ABORTION
- ADDICTION

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THIRTEEN REASONS WHY – SEASON 4



Release Date: June 5th, 2020

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What is known – 13RW⁴

- Netflix announced it will be the last season
- "...they'll have to keep a dangerous secret buried and face heartbreaking choices that could impact their futures forever"
- Will include "compassionate but no nonsense therapist" played by Gary Sinise



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13 Ways We Can Respond

1. Approach teens with **respectfully curiosity**
2. Gently **correct misconceptions**
3. Advise **at-risk youth** NOT to watch the series
4. Inform adults that the **show exists** and how to support youth
5. If youth do watch it, do so with a **trusted adult**
6. Caution against **binge watching**
7. Clinicians may want to **consider watching** the series themselves

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13 Ways We Can Respond (continued)


8. Inform parents of **specific content** that might be difficult for their child
9. Encourage youth to **set limits** about what they will and won't intentionally expose themselves to
10. Help youth craft discrete **"exit strategies"**
11. Reinforce **safety plans** and support patients in attending to self-care
12. Be aware of **guidelines** for safe and effective messaging (especially if talking to media)
13. Spread the word about our toolkit (www.13reasonswhytoolkit.org)

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What do teens actually need?

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How teenagers can protect their mental health during coronavirus (COVID-19)
 a strategy for teens living in non-sterilized homes




"I would never underestimate the creativity of teenagers. My hunch is that they will find ways to connect with one another online that are different from how they've been doing it before." -Lisa Damour, PhD

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>


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Can we reimagine how media could impact teen mental health?

Vietnam's Viral Coronavirus PSA Sparked a TikTok Dance Challenge & These Are 10 of the Best Videos



#safehands



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A Million Little Things

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70fZpru_GmQ

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A Million Little Things - PSA

<https://vimeo.com/292229357>

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A National Conversation is happening



Steve Adelsheim, MD, Stanford University (2019)

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With a reimagined future where...

Narratives on sensitive topics that are compelling and:

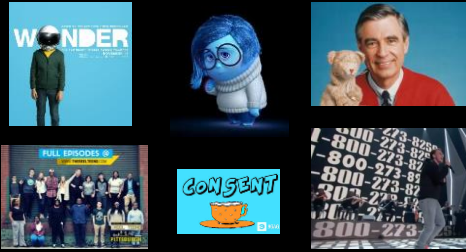
- Feel authentic to teens
- Destigmatize mental illness
- Promote help-seeking
- Are potentially life-saving



Member Service Forum - AACAP 2017

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...could that future could be now?



If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or text the Crisis Text Line at 741-741

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Local Grassroots – Be Creative!

- Virtual watch parties and book clubs
- Viral video contests to promote help-seeking
- Alternate ending script-writing challenge
- Performance art to combat stigma
- Online cartooning to reach younger audiences


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****REMEMBER****

Asking about suicide does not increase the risk of suicide. It is silence that is dangerous.

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Thanks!



Services for Teens At Risk

Contact Us

STAR-Center Is Located At:
100 North Bellefield Avenue, 6th Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

STAR-Center Outpatient Clinic
Phone: (412) 246-5619 (between 8:30AM-5:00PM)
Fax: (412) 246-5610

STAR-Center Outreach
Phone: (412) 864-3346 (between 8:30AM-5:00PM)
Fax: (412) 246-5344

Evenings, weekends, and holidays, call:
resolve Crisis Network at
1-888-7YOU CAN
(1-888-796-8226)

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Resources

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- Sale D, Kairam N, Sherrow L, Fiessler F, Patel D, Walki A. 13 Reasons Why Pediatric Psychiatric Presentations to an Emergency Department in Relation to Release Date. *Annals of Emergency Medicine.* (2017)

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