

988

**SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE**

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Communication Toolkit

**MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATIONS TO PEOPLE
AT HIGHER RISK FOR OR DISPROPORTIONATELY
IMPACTED BY SUICIDE**

Research By:



In Partnership With:



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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 contact 988 or a local trusted support.

Since July 2022, 988 has been the national 3-digit hotline for mental health resources and suicide prevention. Though 988 responded to 5 million contacts in that time, we must increase awareness and use of this valuable resource to address the current and growing need: 15 people per 100,000 died by intentional self-harm in 2022, more than any other year on record in the United States.¹

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 higher risk for or disproportionately impacted by suicide.**

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm>

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 access.² 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 higher risk or disproportionately impacted by suicide.

This population is not homogenous, and communication to them can't be, either. That's why the messaging points and resources in this toolkit are based on the latest research gathered from specific cohorts within the general population. Your organization can confidently use these tools and resources to build awareness and trust in 988.

For the full research study, refer to the report, *988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Messaging and Communications to People at Higher Risk for or Disproportionately Impacted by Suicide.*

PURPOSE

The messaging principles, trusted messengers, and campaign recommendations included in this toolkit are based on research findings from our comprehensive 988 study. 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 people at risk and/or disproportionately impacted by suicide to educate and increase usage of the 988 hotline for people struggling with mental health.

INTENDED AUDIENCES

The 988 messaging described in this toolkit is primarily intended for populations at higher risk for or disproportionately impacted by suicide. It was developed with the following populations in mind. (*Of note, the populations described here are not intended to be a comprehensive listing of those populations at higher risk for or disproportionately impacted by suicide, but rather a sampling.*)

- **American Indian/Alaska Native youth and young adults** (ages 13-34)
- **Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth and young adults** (ages 13-34)
- **Black youth and young adults** (ages 13-34)
- **Hispanic youth and young adults** (ages 13-34)
- **Individuals who have attempted suicide or experienced suicidal ideation during their lifetime** (ages 13+)
- **LGBTQIA+ youth and adults** (ages 13-49)
- **People with disabilities** (ages 13+)
- **Rural older men** (ages 49+)

Our research found that about half the American public—as well as the cohorts we studied—have heard about 988, but only a small fraction of individuals are using it. To overcome this challenge, 988 communications should be crafted in a way that instills trust and confidence and that influences them to use the service.

2. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/disparities-in-suicide.html#:~:text=The%20excess%20burden%20of%20suicide%20in%20some%20populations%20are%20called%20disparities.&text=Examples%20of%20groups%20experiencing%20suicide,of%20color%2C%20and%20tribal%20populations.>

KEY MESSAGING PRINCIPLES

Our study found that those who are at higher risk for or disproportionately impacted by suicide generally found **24/7 availability, the ability to engage with a trained counselor, privacy protection, and no cost as the most resonating and motivational components of 988**. After these highest ranking reasons, the reasons for contacting 988 varied among groups.

In general, if people have heard of 988, research found that they're not always sure what situations warrant using it. This lack of knowledge breeds skepticism and uncertainty, or even fear, among people who are struggling with mental health for a variety of reasons: **They're concerned about opening up to a stranger, worried about privacy, are unsure of credibility and more**. That's why it's critical that 988 messaging directly speak to each group's concerns.

Privacy/Trustworthiness: People want to know that 988 counselors will protect their privacy and that conversations are confidential. Communicators can support this core message by avoiding language that sounds artificial or scripted, and by emphasizing that 988 interactions are private and confidential (in accordance with state and local regulations/requirements).

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 cohorts in the study want to freely share their real experiences with another person, but fear they'll reach someone who can't relate or understand them. Communication campaign efforts can reassure them by using language specific to a group's concerns.

Availability: Overall, people in the study said they're most appreciative of 988's 24/7 availability at no cost. People 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 group in the study.

WORDS, PHRASES & NUMBERS TO AVOID

One of the biggest roadblocks to 988 interest and use is the perception that it's solely an emergency crisis hotline (i.e., used only in emergent situations). In reality, 988 is a source of immediate, free, caring help for those experiencing issues involving mental health or substance use, or those concerned about someone else who is experiencing such issues.

Across all groups, we found that certain words and phrases leave the impression that 988 is only for the most urgent situations. These terms make people dismiss the message as not applying to them when, in fact, they are the very individuals we want to connect with—even if they aren't currently in a situation they'd determine as a "crisis."

According to our research, here are words, phrases and numbers that present challenges; if you use them, you'll need to work hard to provide appropriate context:

"911"

Including 911 (such as "988 is not 911") is confusing at best and makes people hesitant to consider using the resource for non-emergencies at worst. Comparing the two could increase uncertainty and lower trust. These comparisons are not often received as intended. Don't be tempted to make the comparison, especially for the sake of brevity.

"CRISIS"

The word "crisis," as in, "If you're thinking about suicide or you're in crisis, reach out to 988 for support," is confusing and actually diminishes urgency for some people who are at higher risk for or disproportionately impacted by suicide. The word narrowed the definition of situations that would warrant contacting 988, thereby alienating the vast majority of our target audience.

In addition, when referenced after "suicide" (as in, "If you're thinking about suicide or you're in crisis;"), many people said crisis wording felt overshadowed by suicide language. Communicators should consider switching the order of this wording ("if you're in crisis or thinking about suicide") so 988 feels more accessible and inclusive of support earlier in the crisis or beyond only urgent situations.

The bottom line: We recommend avoiding terms that 988 is only for crisis/emergency situations.

"MENTAL HEALTH," "STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH," "MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS"

People distinguish between the phrases "mental health," "struggling with mental health" and "mental health crisis." The former means overall mental and emotional well-being, but adding "struggling" indicates an individual is facing challenges with that well-being. Further, "crisis" signifies a breakdown or inability to cope.

"TRAINED CRISIS COUNSELOR"

The phrase "trained crisis counselor" is ambiguous: The phrase without additional "human" or words connoting caring and trustworthiness sounded scripted and unnatural to some. The phrase reassures some people about the counselor's competency, yet, for others, the word "crisis" in this phrase calls the counselor's competency into question.

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.
Imply there's ever a "better" time to call.

**DO
DON'T**

Give everyone struggling with mental health the assurance they can call.
Imply that 988 is a last resort or only for dire emergencies.

**DO
DON'T**

Stress privacy.
Use ambiguous language about confidentiality.

**DO
DON'T**

Emphasize that counselors are 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 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 motivates people at higher risk for or disproportionately impacted by suicide to use 988 when struggling with mental health. After determining what would motivate participants, we 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 a friend/loved one 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 in 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 participant groups. The frames below are revised for broader use; for additional edits specific to cohort, refer to the information at the end of this toolkit.

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through, and I found myself questioning if my life was really worth it.

Reaching out to 988 was my lifeline. Right away, I spoke to a counselor who could relate - she had worked with people just like me, and she understood my problems and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. I never felt judged, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME

Three overarching areas of concern arose from participants in the qualitative phase regarding 988 and its potential use: its relationship with law enforcement, one's access or ability to use 988 for free, and the professionalism and training of the person on the other end of the line.

For the quantitative phase, the research team addressed these three themes through the use of conditional frames, which were designed to provide additional info and proactively address biases among participants.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

988 connects you with counselors who have one goal: helping you. These skilled, compassionate counselors are focused on you and your best interests, providing a listening ear, an open heart, and real mental health support when you need it most. And it's completely confidential: Just you and your counselor, working together to overcome whatever life has been throwing at you.

988 is separate from law enforcement, and they understand the importance of privacy. It's a private, one-on-one opportunity to talk to a skilled professional.

HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

988 is for everyone, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what you're going through. Through 988, you have access to free, quality one-on-one support, 24/7 - no matter what your situation is, or if you have health insurance, or if you have access to medical professionals near you. Skilled counselors are here for you now.

You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

SKILLED & COMPETENT CARE

988 counselors are skilled, compassionate people who have been specifically trained to deal with situations just like yours - which makes them especially capable of providing tailored and competent mental health support. With 988, you can truly feel like you're talking to someone who understands what you're going through and can be a confidant when you need it most.

Participants across cohorts found the foundational frame extremely/very helpful to their understanding of 988, responding most favorably to phrases reinforcing a personal connection between counselor and caller/chatter/texter. As such, communicators should begin with the foundational frame for any audience they seek to reach with 988 campaign efforts.

While the “Health Equity/Access” conditional frame was the most preferred frame for most cohorts, “Law Enforcement” performed strongly as well, and was the top frame for a few cohort groups. When designing campaigns by cohort, communicators must 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 988 within local, state and any organizational regulations and practices.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

Who delivers a message is often as important as the message itself. Across participant groups, people were most likely to say they trust and get support from family and friends when they’re struggling with their mental health, as well as mental health professionals/organizations (for some). These same individuals/entities are generally also the messengers and resources participants say they’d trust for information on 988.

Trusted messengers are individuals we turn to and trust for honest, unbiased information, and to help guide decision making on important issues.

Some notable differences in trusted messengers and resources can be seen among groups, however. Refer to the sections at the end of this toolkit for guidance on messengers by audience segment.

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

AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 13-34)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons American Indian/Alaska Native people ages 13-34 would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

- 24/7 availability
- It's free
- It's anonymous
- It's quick to call or text
- Wouldn't have to worry about being judged
- Could communicate with someone trained to help

DISLIKES

- Opening up to a stranger
- Might not understand them/the situation
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Credibility (potential lack of)
- Responses might be scripted or not personalized
- Might call law enforcement or take them to a hospital

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

American Indian/Alaska Native people (ages 13-34) gravitated most toward language about the 988 counselor's trustworthiness, listening, lack of judgment and ability to relate to their problems. 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. However, the first paragraph was found to be polarizing (that is, it garnered higher than average likes *and* dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through, and I found myself questioning if my life was really worth it.

I reached out to 988, and right away, I spoke to a counselor who **understood my problems** and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.**

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. **I never felt judged**, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

American Indian/Alaska Native people (ages 13-34) rated the "Health Equity/Access" and "Law Enforcement" conditional frames similarly for improving the foundational frame and adding relevance to it, though "Health Equity/Access" edged out "Law Enforcement" as their preferred frame overall.

Health Equity/Access


988 is for *everyone*, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what you're going through. Through 988, you have access to free, quality, one-on-one support, 24/7 - no matter what your situation is, or if you have health insurance, or if you have access to medical professionals near you. Skilled counselors are here for you *now*.

You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS


When struggling with their mental health, American Indian/Alaska Native people (ages 13-34) most often turn to friends and family (mother, spouse/significant other/partner, sibling) or a mental health professional for support. They would most trust information about 988 from friends, followed by mental health professionals and various family members. These key audiences should be leveraged for 988 message delivery.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING



- Friends
- Mother
- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Mental health professionals
- Sibling(s)

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM



- Close friends
- Mental health professionals
- Mother
- Mental health organizations
- Sibling(s)

ASIAN AMERICAN, NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 13-34)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people ages 13-34 would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

- 24/7 availability
- It's anonymous
- It's free
- Wouldn't have to worry about being judged
- Could communicate with someone trained to help
- It's quick to call or text

DISLIKES

- Opening up to a stranger
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Might not understand them/the situation
- Credibility (potential lack of)
- Responses might be scripted or not personalized
- Might call law enforcement or take them to a hospital

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people ages 13-34 gravitated most toward language about talking to a 988 counselor who could understand and relate to their problems. 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. However, the first sentence, as well as “became my lifeline” and “she had worked with people just like me,” were found to be polarizing (that is, they garnered higher than average likes and dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to **who would really understand what I was going through.**

988 became my lifeline. Right away, I spoke to a counselor **who could relate** - she had worked with people just like me, **and she understood my problems** and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.**

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. **I never felt judged**, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people ages 13-34 rated the “Health Equity/Access” conditional frame higher than the others for improving the foundational frame and adding relevance to it, and they slightly preferred this frame overall.

Health Equity/Access

988 is for everyone, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what you're going through. Through 988, you have access to free, quality, one-on-one support, 24/7 - no matter what your situation is, or if you have health insurance, or if you have access to medical professionals near you. Skilled counselors are here for you now.

You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

When struggling with mental health, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (ages 13-34) said they're most likely to turn to friends, mother, spouse/significant other/partner or resources they find via Google search or on YouTube for support. For information about 988, however, they're more likely to trust mental health professionals/organizations and doctors/medical professionals (in addition to friends and their mother). These key audiences should be leveraged for 988 message delivery, though mediums like Google and YouTube should be considered for resource placement.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING

- Friends
- Mother
- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Resources found via Google search
- Father
- YouTube videos

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM

- Mental health professionals
- Close friends
- Mental health organizations
- Mother
- Doctor/medical professionals

BLACK YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 13-34)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons Black people ages 13-34 would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

- 24/7 availability
- It's free
- It's anonymous
- It's quick to call or text
- Wouldn't have to worry about being judged
- Could communicate with a real person
- Could get additional resources

DISLIKES

- Opening up to a stranger
- Might not understand them/the situation
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Credibility (potential lack of)
- Responses might be scripted or not personalized
- Might call law enforcement or take them to a hospital

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Black people ages 13-34 gravitated most toward language about the 988 counselor's trustworthiness, listening and ability to relate to their problems. 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. However, the first paragraph was found to be polarizing (that is, it garnered higher than average likes and dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through.

I reached out to 988, and right away, I spoke to a counselor **who could relate - she had worked with people just like me**, and she understood my problems and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.**

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. I never felt judged, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

Black people ages 13-34 rated the "Health Equity/Access" conditional frame higher than the others for improving the foundational frame, though "Law Enforcement" came in a close second for adding relevance to it. These two frames were also very close in preference, and communicators' use of either frame could be effective with this audience.

Health Equity/Access

988 is for *everyone*, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what you're going through. Through 988, you have access to free, quality, one-on-one support, 24/7 - no matter what your situation is, or if you have health insurance, or if you have access to medical professionals near you. Skilled counselors are here for you now.

You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

Law Enforcement

988 connects you with counselors who have one goal: Helping you. These skilled, compassionate counselors are focused on you and your best interests, providing a listening ear, an open heart, and real mental health support when you need it most. And it's completely confidential: Just you and your counselor, working together to overcome whatever life has been throwing at you.

988 is separate from law enforcement, and they understand the importance of privacy. It's a private, one-on-one opportunity to talk to a skilled professional.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

Black people (ages 13-34) are most likely to turn to family when struggling with mental health: their mother, friends, spouse/significant other/partner or sibling, followed by YouTube videos. For information about 988, mother and friends again top the list, followed by mental health professionals/organizations. For Black audiences ages 13-34, communicators should leverage family and friends first for 988 message delivery, as well as mental health professionals—though a medium like YouTube should be considered for resource placement.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING

- Mother
- Friends
- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Sibling(s)
- YouTube videos

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM

- Mother
- Close friends
- Mental health professionals
- Mental health organizations
- Sibling(s)

HISPANIC YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 13-34)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons Hispanic people ages 13-34 would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

- 24/7 availability
- It's anonymous
- It's free
- Wouldn't have to worry about being judged
- Could communicate with a real person
- It's quick to call or text

DISLIKES

- Opening up to a stranger
- Might not understand them/the situation
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Credibility (potential lack of)
- Responses might be scripted or not personalized
- Might call parents/law enforcement or take them to a hospital

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Hispanic people (ages 13-34) most liked language about the 988 counselor's ability to relate, as well as their trustworthiness, listening and lack of judgment. 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. However, the first paragraph, as well as "became my lifeline" and "she had worked with people just like me," were found to be polarizing (that is, they garnered higher than average likes and dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through, and I found myself questioning if my life was really worth it.

988 became my lifeline. **Right away, I spoke to a counselor who could relate** - she had worked with people just like me, and **she understood my problems** and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.**

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. **I never felt judged**, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

Hispanic people (ages 13-34) rated "Health Equity/Access" higher than the "Law Enforcement" conditional frame improving the foundational frame, and slightly higher for adding relevance to it. Overall, they preferred "Health Equity/Access" over "Law Enforcement."

Health Equity/Access

988 is for *everyone*, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what you're going through. Through 988, you have access to free, quality, one-on-one support, 24/7 - no matter what your situation is, or if you have health insurance, or if you have access to medical professionals near you. Skilled counselors are here for you now.

You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

When struggling with their mental health, Hispanic people (ages 13-34) most often turn to friends and family (mother, spouse/significant other/partner) or a mental health professional for support, as well as YouTube videos. This audience would most trust information about 988 from mental health professionals, followed again by family and friends. These key audiences should be leveraged for 988 message delivery, and a channel like YouTube should be considered for resource placement.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING

- Friends
- Mother
- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Mental health professionals
- YouTube videos

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM

- Mental health professionals
- Close friends
- Mother
- Mental health organizations
- Doctor/medical professionals

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE OR EXPERIENCED SUICIDAL IDEATION DURING THEIR LIFETIME (AGES 13+)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons individuals who reported experiencing suicidal ideation would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

24/7 availability

It's anonymous

It's free

Could communicate with a real person who's trained to help

Wouldn't have to worry about being judged

Would be faster than finding a therapist/counselor

DISLIKES

Opening up to a stranger

Might call parents (among teens)/law enforcement or take them to a hospital

Might not understand them/the situation

Privacy/confidentiality

Credibility (potential lack of)

Responses might be scripted or not personalized

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Individuals who reported experiencing suicidal ideation gravitated most toward language about the 988 counselor's care, trustworthiness, listening, lack of judgment and ability to relate to their problems. 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. However, the first paragraph, as well as "she had worked with people just like me" was found to be polarizing (that is, it garnered higher than average likes and dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through, and I found myself questioning if my life was really worth it.

I reached out to 988, and right away, I spoke to a counselor **who could relate** - she had worked with people just like me, and **she understood my problems** and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.**

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. **I never felt judged**, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. **Your conversation is confidential**, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

People who reported experiencing suicidal ideation rated "Health Equity/Access" slightly higher than the "Law Enforcement" conditional frames for both for improving the foundational frame and adding relevance to it. Overall, they preferred "Health Equity/Access" over "Law Enforcement."

Health Equity/Access

988 is for *everyone*, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what you're going through. Through 988, you have access to free, quality, one-on-one support, 24/7 - no matter what your situation is, or if you have health insurance, or if you have access to medical professionals near you. Skilled counselors are here for you *now*.

You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

When struggling with their mental health, participants who reported experiencing suicidal ideation said they most often turn to friends, spouse/significant other/partner or mental health professional for support. This audience would also trust information about 988 from similar audiences, as well as doctor/medical professionals—which are the key audiences communicators should leverage for 988 message delivery.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING

- Friends
- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Mental health professionals
- Healthcare provider
- Mother

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM

- Mental health professionals
- Mental health organizations
- Close friends
- Doctor/medical professionals
- Spouse/significant other/partner

LGBTQIA+ YOUTH AND ADULTS (AGES 13-49)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons LGBTQIA+ individuals would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

24/7 availability

It's anonymous

It's free

Wouldn't have to worry about being judged

Could communicate with a real person who's trained to help

Would be faster than finding a therapist/counselor

DISLIKES

Opening up to a stranger

Privacy/confidentiality

Might not understand them/the situation

Might call law enforcement or take them to a hospital

Would not have a serious enough need/would use resources
that other may need more

Credibility (potential lack of)

Responses might be scripted or not personalize

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

LGBTQIA+ people particularly gravitated toward language around inclusivity and understanding by a 988 counselor. 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. However, the first paragraph, as well as “she had worked with people just like me” was found to be polarizing (that is, it garnered higher than average likes and dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through, and I found myself questioning if my life was really worth it.

I reached out to 988, and right away, I spoke to a counselor **who could relate** - she had worked with people just like me, **and she understood my problems** and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.**

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. **I never felt judged**, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

LGBTQIA+ individuals rated “Law Enforcement” and “Health Equity/Access” conditional frames equally, both for improving the foundational frame and adding relevance to it. When asked which conditional frame they prefer, however, they chose “Health Equity/Access” over “Law Enforcement.”

Health Equity/Access

988 is for *everyone*, regardless of who you are, where you live, or what you're going through. Through 988, you have access to free, quality, one-on-one support, 24/7 - no matter what your situation is, or if you have health insurance, or if you have access to medical professionals near you. Skilled counselors are here for you *now*.

You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

When struggling with their mental health, LGBTQIA+ participants said they most often turn to friends, family or professionals for support. Specific to information about 988, however, mental health professionals or organizations were higher ranked than friends and family. To an LGBTQIA+ audience, communicators should consider 988 message delivery first through professionals, though one's friends and family can help support messaging—particularly in a situation where someone is struggling with mental health.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING

- Friends
- Mother
- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Mental health professionals
- Healthcare provider

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM

- Mental health professionals
- Mental health organizations
- Close friends
- Doctor/medical professionals
- Mother

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (AGES 13+)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons individuals with disabilities would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

- 24/7 availability
- Could communicate with a real person who's trained to help
- It's anonymous
- It's free
- Wouldn't have to worry about being judged
- Would be faster than finding a therapist/counselor
- Could get additional resources

DISLIKES

- Opening up to a stranger
- Might call parents (among teens)/law enforcement or take them to a hospital
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Credibility (potential lack of)
- Might not understand them/the situation
- Would not have a serious enough need/would use resources that other may need more
- Responses might be scripted or not personalized

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

People with disabilities gravitated most toward language about the 988 counselor's ability to relate and understand their problems, as well as wording that expressed the counselor's trustworthiness, listening and lack of judgment. 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. However, the first paragraph, as well as "became my lifeline," were found to be polarizing (that is, they garnered higher than average likes *and* dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed, anxious. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through, and I found myself questioning if my life was really worth it.

988 became my lifeline. Right away, **I spoke to a counselor who could relate** - she had worked with people just like me, **and she understood my problems** and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust** and confide in her.

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. **I never felt judged**, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

People with disabilities rated the "Health Equity/Access" and "Law Enforcement" conditional frames equally for both improving the foundational frame and adding relevance to it. They slightly preferred "Health Equity/Access" over "Law Enforcement," though either frame could prove to be effective with this audience.

Health Equity/Access

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You are not alone, and you deserve to feel heard and cared about - any time, from anywhere, day or night.

Law Enforcement

988 connects you with counselors who have one goal: Helping you. These skilled, compassionate counselors are focused on you and your best interests, providing a listening ear, an open heart, and real mental health support when you need it most. And it's completely confidential: Just you and your counselor, working together to overcome whatever life has been throwing at you.

988 is separate from law enforcement, and they understand the importance of privacy. It's a private, one-on-one opportunity to talk to a skilled professional.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

People with disabilities said they're most likely to turn to their spouse/significant other/partner, friends, healthcare provider or mental health professional when struggling with their mental health. This audience would also trust information about 988 from similar audiences, as well as doctor/medical professionals—which are the key audiences communicators should leverage for 988 message delivery.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING

- Friends
- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Mental health professionals
- Healthcare provider
- Mother

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM

- Mental health professionals
- Mental health organizations
- Doctor/medical professionals
- Close friends
- Spouse/significant other/partner

RURAL OLDER MEN (AGES 49+)

988 Use | Likes & Dislikes

Below are the top reasons rural older men (ages 49+) would or would not consider using 988, which communicators should take into account when crafting messaging.

LIKES

- 24/7 availability
- Could communicate with a real person who's trained to help
- It's anonymous
- Wouldn't have to worry about being judged
- Would be faster than finding a therapist/counselor
- Could get additional resources

DISLIKES

- Credibility (potential lack of)
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Responses might be scripted or not personalize
- Training (potential lack of)
- Would not have a serious enough need/would use resources that others may need more
- Opening up to a stranger

USING THE MESSAGE FRAMES

FOUNDATIONAL FRAME

Rural older men (ages 49+) gravitated most toward language about the 988 counselor's ability to relate and understand their problems, as well as their trustworthiness, listening and lack of judgment. 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. However, the first paragraph, as well as "became my lifeline," were found to be polarizing (that is, they garnered higher than average likes and dislikes among participants), and should be used with caution.

Life became so ... overwhelming. I was stressed. I felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to who would really understand what I was going through.

In that moment, reaching out to 988 became my lifeline. Right away, I **spoke to a counselor who could relate** - she had worked with people just like me, **and she understood my problems** and where I was coming from. From the first few minutes we spoke, **I felt like I could really trust and confide in her.**

It finally felt like someone cared to just listen, and to provide help if I wanted it - which was exactly what I needed at a time when life felt like too much to handle on my own. **I never felt judged**, and our conversation helped me remember I wasn't alone.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by life or emotions, you don't know where to turn when in crisis, or you're questioning if your life is worth it, call/text/chat with a counselor at 988. You'll get one-on-one support from a skilled, compassionate counselor, 24/7. Your conversation is confidential, you'll feel heard and cared about, and you'll get connected with local mental health support.

CONDITIONAL FRAME TO USE: HEALTH EQUITY/ACCESS

Rural older men rated "Law Enforcement" slightly higher than the "Health Equity/Access" conditional frame for both improving the foundational frame and adding relevance to it, and they slightly preferred it overall.

Law Enforcement

988 connects you with counselors who have one goal: Helping you. These skilled, compassionate counselors are focused on you and your best interests, providing a listening ear, an open heart, and real mental health support when you need it most. And it's completely confidential: Just you and your counselor, working together to overcome whatever life has been throwing at you.

988 is separate from law enforcement, and they understand the importance of privacy. It's a private, one-on-one opportunity to talk to a skilled professional.

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

When struggling with mental health, rural older men said they're most likely to turn to their spouse/significant other/partner for support—followed distantly by friends, and then a healthcare provider. They're also most likely to trust information about 988 from their spouse/partner, though they'd also trust doctor/medical professionals, mental health professionals or organizations, or friends. Specifically for 988 message delivery, communicators should leverage spouses/partners and medical/mental health professionals—though understand that this audience most often seeks support in general from their spouse/partner.

TOP RESOURCES USED WHEN STRUGGLING

- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Friends
- Healthcare provider

TOP RESOURCES THEY'D TRUST 988 INFO FROM

- Spouse/significant other/partner
- Doctor/medical professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Mental health organizations
- Close friends