



International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP)

BRIEFING STATEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE “BLUE WHALE GAME”

In response to the recent global media coverage surrounding the “Blue Whale Game,” Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) and the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) have prepared the following statement in which we express our concern about the likely negative impact on young people, in particular those who are vulnerable, and suggest that the media should be highly cautious when and if reporting on this story.

Earlier this year, media reported that there was a “suicide game” that had resulted in an increasing number of deaths by suicide of young people. The general premise of the game, which goes by several names but is commonly referred to as the “Blue Whale Game or Challenge” is that players agree to follow instructions from an administrator over the course of 50 days. The administrator gives assignments that the player is supposed to carry out, ranging from mundane tasks to self-harming behavior, and the players are threatened with harm if they do not follow instructions. Players are also encouraged to tag others through social media and encourage them to join the game. The player “wins” when they complete the final task, which is to take their life, on the 50th day.

In addition to Russia, mental health services and schools in several European countries have reported suicides and suicide attempts among young people associated with Blue Whale. Police in numerous countries have also issued warnings expressing their concern. As media reports on the game continue to occur and information on it spreads virally through social media channels, there is concern that vulnerable youth will join the game and/or related online gaming groups with similar names that support the Blue Whale Challenge.

In light of recent global discussion about youth suicide and in order to help reduce the risk of this game gaining additional attention and participation, as well as minimizing the risk of suicide contagion, SAVE and IASP urge all representatives to monitor cases carefully.

Parents, teachers and others should be aware of the need to talk with adolescents and children who have heard about, joined or are engaged in any aspects of the online game(s), and to encourage them to express their feelings in response to the game. For young people who have engaged in self-harming behaviors or who have plans to hurt themselves, immediate intervention is suggested. In these situations, we recommend that parents contact their local Medical Doctor or Youth Mental Health Service.

SAVE/IASP are conscious of the potential negative impact of increasing media coverage of Blue Whale, and therefore recommend that this briefing is not circulated among the media and should only be used when specific media requests are received. On such occasions, the media should adhere to international guidelines and recommendations when reporting on suicide:

<http://www.reportingonsuicide.org>;

<http://www.samaritans.org/media-centre/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide>

In any stories that are written, media should include factual information on suicide and rates, the research-based warning signs for youth suicide (www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org), and details of helplines and support services for adolescents and concerned parents.

An overview of relevant helplines and support services for people in distress in different countries can be accessed via: https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres.

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24th May 2017