

SHATTERED ICE

Understanding Grief, Coping and Hope



POST-FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE

Duration 30-45 minutes

Audience High school students and older

Facilitator Educator, school counselor,
teacher, health professional, coach, etc.



**The Kids
Mental Health
Foundation™**

1. Mental Health & Emotional Health



OVERVIEW

Mental health is a key component of overall health. It includes to how we think, feel and behave, especially when facing stress or challenges. Mental health helps us build strong relationships, make thoughtful decisions and bounce back from setbacks. In adolescence, mental health can be influenced by school pressure, social dynamics, family life and identity development. Recognizing signs of emotional distress such as withdrawal, irritability or changes in sleep or appetite is important for early support and intervention.

In *Shattered Ice*, characters like Will and Cam show how mental health can be impacted by the death of a close friend (Danny). Some changes are immediate. Other changes happen over time and are influenced by grief, guilt and pressure to conform to social pressures. Their emotional struggles affect their behavior, relationships, and ability to cope. The film highlights the importance of communication, connection and self-awareness in maintaining mental wellness.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT

Mental health is something we all have, and we can make it stronger. In *Shattered Ice*, we see how emotional challenges affect not just people, but entire communities. Will, Cam and others struggle with emotions like guilt, anger and sadness. These feelings are normal after a loss, but how we manage them matters. No one should have to face tough times alone. Let's talk about what mental health looks like and we can support it through talking, understanding ourselves and building connections.

Discussion Questions:

- *What are some signs in the film that a character's mental health is being affected? How do others respond to it?*
- *How does the hockey team's culture influence how players show their emotions?*
- *How is our community the same as the one shown in the film? How is it different?*
- *What role do friends play in supporting or challenging mental health in the film?*



Coping Prompt:

Think about a time when you felt overwhelmed.

What helped you feel more balanced or supported?

2. Grief and Suicide Loss



OVERVIEW

Grief is a natural response to the loss of someone we care about. Grief can affect people emotionally, physically and socially. Losing someone to suicide adds layers of complexity, including feelings of guilt, confusion and stigma. Adolescents may struggle to understand or express grief, especially when the loss is sudden or traumatic. It's important to know that grief doesn't follow a set timeline and that everyone experiences it differently.

In the film, Danny's suicide leaves his teammates and family in shock. Will feels responsible, while

others avoid talking about it. These reactions reflect common patterns in suicide loss, where survivors may feel isolated or unsure how to process their emotions. The film encourages viewers to recognize that talking about grief and seeking support are essential steps toward healing. Although it takes time, Will ultimately grows through his experience by processing his loss with people he trusts.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT

Grief doesn't follow a straight line. After Danny's death, each character in the film reacts differently. Will feels guilt and pulls away, while others avoid talking about it. This is common in suicide loss; people may not know how to express their pain or support others. Grief can feel lonely, but it doesn't have to be. Let's look at how the characters cope with their loss and what helps or makes it harder for them to heal.

Discussion Questions:

- *How do different characters in the film respond to Danny's death? What helps or makes it harder for them to move forward?*
- *What impact does the community's silence around Danny's suicide have on the team?*
- *How do moments of shared grief help characters begin to reconnect?*
- *Do you know about any grief or mental health supports in our community?*



Coping Prompt:

What are some healthy ways people can express grief or support someone who is grieving?

More resources to continue the conversation: [Grief and suicide loss](#) [Helping a child grieve a death](#)

3. Healthy and Unhealthy Coping Strategies



OVERVIEW

Coping strategies are the behaviors and tools we use to manage stress, emotions and difficult situations. Healthy coping, such as talking with someone you trust, exercising or journaling, can help manage emotions in positive ways. Unhealthy coping, such as avoiding people or responsibilities or misusing substances, may provide temporary relief but often causes long-term harm. Teens are especially at risk of turning to substances to cope with emotional pain, peer pressure or trauma. While it can be okay to step back from some

responsibilities in the immediate aftermath of a stressful event, relying on unhealthy coping often makes recovery more difficult.

In *Shattered Ice*, Will turns to alcohol to numb his grief and guilt. This choice affects his relationships and mental health. The film shows how avoidance through substance use can deepen emotional struggles, while connection and vulnerability can lead to healing. Understanding the difference between helpful and harmful coping is essential for building resilience.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT

Will uses alcohol to cope with his grief and guilt. This is common, but it's also a risky response. Numbing emotions may feel helpful at first, but it often causes more problems. Will ends up in dangerous situations many times due to substance misuse and pulling away from loved ones. On the other hand, moments of connection, like Will's conversation with Cam, show healthier ways to cope. Let's look at how characters in the film handle stress and talk about how we can find ways to stay mentally healthy over time.

Discussion Questions:

- *What coping strategies do you see in the film? Which ones seem to help or hurt the characters?*
- *How does Will's substance use affect his relationships and ability to heal?*
- *What role do friends and teammates play in encouraging or discouraging healthy coping?*

Coping Prompt:

What's one coping strategy you've used to help feel calmer or more in control during tough times?

More resources to continue the conversation: [Substance use and coping](#) [Coping with strong emotions](#)

4. Suicide Prevention & Sources of Support



OVERVIEW

Suicide prevention involves reducing stigma, recognizing warning signs and creating safe environments for people to talk about their struggles. Warning signs include changes in behavior, expressions of hopelessness or burden, withdrawal from friends or giving away possessions. Protective factors such as strong relationships, enjoyable activities, access to mental health care and a sense of purpose can reduce suicide risk.

In the film, Danny's death highlights missed opportunities for connection and support, while Will's guilt comes from not recognizing the signs

or reaching out. The story emphasizes that asking for help is a sign of strength and that everyone has a role to play in supporting others. Open conversations, active listening and knowing where to turn for help are all important parts of suicide prevention. Although professional mental health support is not depicted in the film, it is important to know that most mental health conditions are treatable and that care can be accessed before a crisis occurs. Effective treatments for anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts and behaviors exist, and research shows they work for both youth and adults.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT

Danny's death is a tragedy and, as the film says, it's no one's fault. However, the film highlights missed opportunities for people to connect, especially those impacted by suicide loss. Preventing suicide is more than crisis help. It's about building a safe space where people feel OK speaking up. In the film, we see how guilt and stigma affect Will. But we also see hope when people begin talking and reconnecting. Let's talk about how we can support each other and notice when someone might need help. We'll also share ways to get help, like therapy, crisis lines and support at school or in the community.

Discussion Questions:

- *What part of the film show how not talking and communicating impacted the characters' ability to support each other? What parts show how talking and building connections helped?*
- *What could have helped Danny feel more supported or less alone?*
- *How can communities and schools create safer spaces to make it easier for people to ask for help?*

Coping Prompt:

Who do you feel safe talking to when you're struggling? What makes it easy to talk to them?

Get more resources on suicide prevention.

5. Hope and Positive Change



OVERVIEW

Hope is a powerful force in mental health because it helps people believe that things can improve, even during difficult times. Resilience, or the ability to recover from adversity, is strengthened through supportive relationships, self-reflection, and personal growth. Teens benefit from understanding that setbacks are a normal part of life and that healing is possible, though they may lack the life experience to know that crises do not last forever. It is important not to minimize a teen's struggles, as their experiences feel very real in the moment.

By the end of *Shattered Ice*, the characters begin to reconnect and heal. Will visits Danny's grave, Cam forgives, and Jack opens up emotionally. These moments highlight that change is possible when people choose vulnerability, forgiveness, and connection, and the film encourages viewers to hold onto hope and find meaning, even in overwhelming times.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT

By the end of *Shattered Ice*, we see signs of healing. Will visits Danny's grave, reconnects with his teammates and begins to let go of guilt and personal blame for not understanding what Danny was going through. Cam forgives, Jack opens up and the team starts to rebuild. These moments show that change is possible. Hope doesn't erase pain, but it gives us a reason to keep going. Danny's loss is still felt, but the grief changes so they can move forward and honor his memory. Let's reflect on what led to these positive changes and how we can nurture hope in our own lives.

Discussion Questions:

- *What helped the characters begin to heal and reconnect by the end of the film?*
- *How did relationships and forgiveness help the characters' growth?*
- *How do moments of shared grief help characters begin to reconnect?*
- *What lessons did the characters learn about themselves and each other?*

Coping Prompt:

What gives you hope when things feel overwhelming, and how can you hold onto that during tough times?

STUDENT AND FAMILY RESOURCES

If students need support beyond the discussion, share these resources:



Mental Health Support

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** – Call or text 988 for free, 24/7 support
- **Kids Mental Health Foundation** (free educational resources to support youth mental health and wellness) – [KidsMentalhealthFoundation.org](https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org)
- **Mental Health America** – [mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)
- **Seize the Awkward** (conversation starters and tools for teens and friends) – [seizetheawkward.org](https://www.seizetheawkward.org)
- **The Trevor Project** (24/7 support for LGBTQ+ youth) – [thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org)
- **Jed Foundation (JED)** (mental health education and support for teens and young adults) – [jedfoundation.org](https://www.jedfoundation.org)
- **Teen Line** (hotline and text support with trained teen listeners) – [teenlineonline.org](https://www.teenlineonline.org)

Grief Support

- **The Dougy Center** (national center for grieving children and teens, with resources and support groups) – [dougy.org](https://www.dougy.org)

Substance Use Support

- **SAMHSA National Helpline** – 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- **Partnership to End Addiction** – [drugfree.org](https://www.drugfree.org)



ABOUT THE EXPERT

John Ackerman, PhD, is a board-certified clinical child and adolescent psychologist and Suicide Prevention Clinical Manager for the Center for Suicide Prevention and Research (CSPR) at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. He is also a contributor to The Kids Mental Health Foundation, the nation's leading organization promoting mental health in the United States, created by Nationwide Children's.

The CSPR supports school, health care and youth-serving community organizations in Ohio implement effective and sustainable suicide prevention programming efforts. He and his team have developed novel youth suicide prevention programs to support a range of needs, including a program tailored to youth at the Boys & Girls Clubs and a curriculum for elementary students.

Dr. Ackerman is faculty with the Zero Suicide Institute and focuses on training organizations in evidence-based suicide care in pediatric healthcare settings. He also supports school and community postvention response following a student death by suicide and is a member of the Franklin County Child Fatality Review team.

Dr. Ackerman has a research interest in the treatment of mood disorders, neurocognitive risk factors for youth suicide as well as digital health applications for suicide prevention. He has published on the influence of media on youth suicide and has developed guidelines for media professionals engaging with this topic. He has co-edited an open-access book on youth suicide prevention best practices and policy implications.

About The Kids Mental Health Foundation

The Kids Mental Health Foundation is a national nonprofit dedicated to making children's mental health as important as physical health. Founded by Nationwide Children's Hospital, The Kids Mental Health Foundation provides free, expert-created resources for parents, teachers, coaches and caregivers to help kids build mental wellness skills and manage life's challenges. Its vision is to create a world where mental health is a vital part of growing up.

Through free resources on its website and programs like classroom kits, educator wellness resources and community partnerships, the Foundation empowers grown-ups to create safe, supportive environments where every child can thrive emotionally and mentally.



Coping with loss is hard and how we depict suicide loss matters. We were honored to bring our expertise to help create a discussion guide for the movie *Shattered Ice* for use with schools and organizations to help educate and spread awareness about this topic. We hope through these discussions, we will open conversations about the importance of communication and connection, dealing with loss and processing grief and reaching out for professional support.” —**Dr. John Ackerman**

Dr. John Ackerman, is a Kids Mental Health Foundation contributor and suicide prevention clinical manager at The Center for Suicide Prevention and Research at Nationwide Children's Hospital

About The Film



A New England teenage hockey player attempts to navigate life after his best friend - the school's star player - dies by suicide.

Genre: Sport/Drama

Production Company: Nehoiden Street Films

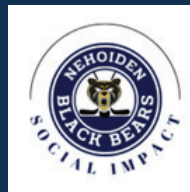
World Premiere: February 24, 2025 | Sedona International Film Festival *Most Impactful Film Award*

Director: Alex Ranarivelo

Writer: Jake Miskin

Producers: Jake Miskin, Daniel Sheldon, Benjamin Stephen, Christopher V. Nelson

Cast: Charlie Gillespie, Kyla Kenedy, Sterling Beaumon, Kevin Chapman, with Jack Falahee, and Matt Letscher



For more information about Shattered Ice, visit the [Nehoiden Black Bears Shop](#) For more kids mental health resources, visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation..](#)

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