



## **After the Fact | 10 Minutes That Can Save a Life**

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### **TRANSCRIPT**

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**Maya Loudd, defender, University of Washington women's soccer team:** In the past, I would say that a lot of my mood was dictated off of my athletic performance.

Now I feel like I've learned more about myself and my value to know that I am more than just what I perform as on the soccer field. And just having people around me and in my circle that continue to remind me the same thing, really just puts my mind at ease.

**Gabriela Domenzain, host, "After the Fact" podcast:** Welcome to "After the Fact." For The Pew Charitable Trusts, I'm Gabriela Domenzain.

Today we're talking about a serious public health topic in the United States, which is suicide prevention. Each September marks National Suicide Prevention Month, a moment to share resources and spread hope about mental health and suicide prevention.

While this is an important issue to talk about, we recognize that it can be heavy for many listeners. If you or someone you know needs help, please call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988, or visit [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) and click on the chat button.

One group that is vulnerable to suicide risk is student athletes. At the top of the episode, you heard from Maya Loudd, a student and soccer player at the University of Washington. Last year, one of her teammates died from cancer, and the entire club went through a process of grieving. We'll hear more from her later in the episode and how the university launched a program to help students going through difficult times.

But first, I spoke with Pew's Kristen Mizzi Angelone to learn about the work she leads on suicide risk reduction, the populations that are most at risk, and the connection to mental healthcare.



**Gabriela Domenzain:** So this is obviously a very sensitive subject. What's the importance of talking about this?

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** That's a great question because for a long time there was a general misconception that talking about suicide—whether it's a healthcare provider, whether it's a friend or a family member asking someone if they've been having thoughts of suicide—that that would somehow incite someone to think about suicide, or it would plant the idea in their head. And so, people were afraid to talk about it.

But research has shown and experience has shown that that misconception has really been debunked and that, in fact, talking about suicide, asking about suicide, taking the scary issue and putting it out into the open, is really the key to helping ensure that people who are having these thoughts and feelings are able to disclose them to a trusted individual and get the help that they need.

Talking about it is the first step toward kind of removing the stigma around the issue of suicide.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** And making it OK to talk about it.

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** Exactly.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** Kristen, what is the data telling us about suicide in the United States?

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** Suicide remains a serious public health issue in the United States. In 2024, which is the most recent year that we have data available, almost 49,000 people died of suicide in the U.S., which is the highest number of suicide deaths this country has ever seen in one year.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** What do we know about folks that are at higher risk for suicide or suicidal thoughts?

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** There is a number of populations, including groups like Indigenous Americans, Black Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, are all experiencing increasing rates of suicide. There are other certain groups of people also experiencing higher rates, including veterans, people who identify as LGBTQ, and people who have experienced disasters or serious events in their lives.

I should also mention that as suicide has reentered the top 10 causes of death in the United States for all people, it's also the second leading cause of death for young



people ages 10-24. And so, we really see the increasing rates of suicide in this teenage and young adult population as well.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** Do we know why suicide rates have increased in the demographics that you mentioned?

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** Suicide is a multifaceted issue, and so it's hard to pinpoint a single cause of suicide. It can be related to health history, family experiences, community experiences as well.

But about half of people who die of suicide have no diagnosed mental health condition. And what that tells me is that there's a lot of people in our population who are walking around right now with suicidal thoughts, potential suicidal behaviors, that have not been identified.

And that really reinforces the importance of creating opportunities for people to be asked if they're experiencing mental health concerns and giving them space to share those feelings as well.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** Kristen, let's talk about some of the treatments and programs that have produced positive results.

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** So, Pew has been working to make suicide care a more routine part of healthcare in the United States.

Research shows that about half of people who die of suicide have interacted with a healthcare provider within about a month of their deaths. And so, we're working to make sure that those interactions, wherever they take place, that the healthcare provider is able to ensure that they get the care that they need.

So, any time you go into a hospital, you're asked about suicide risk, and that it becomes as natural and normal as having your blood pressure taken, and if that person is asked general questions, one of those questions should be about suicide risk.

But it's really important to understand what happens when a patient discloses to their healthcare provider they have been having thoughts of suicide or having other mental health challenges.

And so, some of those evidence-based interventions include things like safety planning, which is where a patient and a provider work collaboratively to develop a plan in the event that that patient experiences suicide risk or a suicidal crisis in the



future. And the plan will include things like people to call, they know that going for a walk with their dog is something that helps them calm down, information about contacting 988, maybe some physical things—making sure their firearms are locked in a certain way or medications are locked in a certain way. And so they'll work through a really concrete plan to get through those kind of moments of considering suicide.

Research also shows that oftentimes those moments of suicidal crisis only last maybe 10 minutes or so.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** That's really fascinating, the 10 minutes, just wait 10 minutes. Is that what it means?

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** It means that the moment of crisis is passed and that you've gotten through that moment of crisis, and hopefully, as part of, you know, enacting your safety plan, you're able to talk to a crisis counselor at 988, you're able to talk to your healthcare provider, that you're able to get the care that you need so that you are in a more stable place.

A couple other interventions that have been shown to reduce the likelihood of someone attempting or dying of suicide are things like warm handoffs, which is where, you know, your either general practitioner or ER physician actually introduces the patient directly to a mental health provider and helps them set up their kind of initial appointment with a mental health provider. And it can be overwhelming when you're experiencing suicide risk to try to find a provider and set up an appointment and figure out kind of all of the logistics.

And then the last intervention that I'd like to mention is wellness calls after you've been in the emergency department. And this is a very simple intervention, but one that has really strong evidence behind it. And it's where, you know, after you leave the emergency department, either a social worker or a nurse or someone from the hospital gives you a call and checks in on you: "How are you feeling? Have you set up your first appointment? When is your first appointment with your mental health provider? What questions do you have?" And really just sits with them on the phone or sometimes over text and answers their questions and makes sure that they know what's next and that they know how they're going to get care.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** You mentioned that one of the tactics is creating a list of people that you call when you're in moments of crisis. I can imagine that making that call is really hard. How do you help people bridge that tension and pick up the phone and call in those moments?



**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** That's actually one of the interesting steps that you can do as part of a safety plan is it's not just about writing down the person's phone number. It's just like, "OK, why don't we get them on the phone right now? Let's let them know that they are your person to call in case of a suicidal crisis in the future."

**Gabriela Domenzain:** Interesting.

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** And you get that other person on the phone, and, you know, the healthcare provider, the patient, and their kind of source of support, talk through, "OK, well, what is everyone's role in this situation? Let's run through what this would look like in the future."

That way everyone is on the same page, everyone knows what their role is, and everyone is able to show up for one another. It's another opportunity to take away the stigma around suicide, take away the stigma around mental health, and make sure that people who are having challenges have the support that they need.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** One of the groups that you mentioned was young folks. And a particular subset of these that we're going to be talking to in Washington state are student athletes. Why are student athletes being targeted for interventions or for work in this area?

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** It's an important population to focus on because recent research shows that over the last decade, suicide was the second leading cause of death among all student athletes who died.

There is a need to focus on their kind of unique positions as student athletes and the unique stress and experiences that they may have.

And that's why there's a number of programs going on around the country, including the one at the University of Washington, that is really focused on ensuring that all student athletes understand suicide, understand suicide prevention, are given the support and structures that they need so that if they are experiencing mental health challenges, they have someone to turn to.

I was a student athlete when I was in college, and I remember the added stresses on your time, on your energy, on your social relationships as well. You know, when you're put in these situations where you have a lot of demands on your time and effort, it can be stressful.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** How do you destigmatize this with your close friends, with your family?



**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** I mean, the first step is to talk about it. You know, since I've been working on this issue at Pew, you know, talking with friends at parties, people ask about my job. And it's very interesting the responses that I get when I tell them that I work on the issue of suicide risk reduction.

And sometimes it makes people a little uncomfortable, and they say, "I thought we were just making small talk, and now we're talking about this very serious issue."

But more often than not, it results in the person wanting to tell me their personal story because most of us have one.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** So just mentioning it makes it so that people can open up.

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** Exactly.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** Which kind of speaks to how seamless it can be to have somebody open themselves up to you in order to help.

**Kristen Mizzi Angelone:** And it really reinforces how valuable it is to be asked.

Opening up the door to acknowledge that suicide is an issue that many people have experienced really creates these opportunities for people to share and feel a little less alone.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** The University of Washington, known as U-Dub, recently developed a suicide prevention program for student athletes looking for support.

Our team traveled to Seattle to speak with people involved in these efforts. But first, we hear more from Maya Loudd. She's a defender for the Huskies, U-Dub's women's soccer team.

**Maya Loudd:** I only have positive things to say about being a student athlete here at the University of Washington.

It feels really good to be able to come into a place where you see familiar faces everywhere that you go, and also just people that you're comfortable with.

I've been living in a house for the past three years with six of my teammates. We really do everything together, truly. We're a very tight-knit group, and just pretty much a big 30-plus person family.



**Gabriela Domenzain:** Social support and a sense of belonging can help strengthen mental health.

But at the same time, Maya spoke about how athlete culture can make it harder for student athletes to seek help.

**Maya Loudd:** I think competing at the level that we compete at, as athletes, a lot of the times we try to push through things and not ask for help. But it's really important to understand that you don't have to always try to take on all these things by yourself.

It definitely is sometimes tough on our body, not just like our muscles and our legs, but also our brains. We have a high standard in the classroom. We are expected to be our best, not just on the field, but outside of the field.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** On top of these pressures on student athletes, the U-Dub women's soccer team faced an unexpected and devastating diagnosis for one of the players on the team.

**Maya Loudd:** Mia was one of our goalkeepers on our squad, just one year older than me. She was a huge part of our team.

In 2025, spring of 2025, she got diagnosed with a rare form of Stage 4 kidney cancer. After that, she was, you know, just doing what she could to try to fight this. And then only, I think it's about six months later, in November, she ended up passing away.

She battled as hard as she could but just at the stage that she was at and the form of cancer that she had was just too rigorous for her to fight.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** And her death from cancer was a lot for her teammates to process.

**Maya Loudd:** It impacted the team significantly. I remember the day after, we took a break from soccer. We spent time together, talked about her, remembered her for how amazing she was.

And then after her passing, we were in quite a unique situation. It was in the midst of our season. We had to go on and kind of try to compartmentalize and grieve how we could grieve the best we could and also perform the best we could.



**Dr. Kelly A. Schloredt, director of psychological services and team clinical psychologist, University of Washington Athletics:** Just as a society, we tend to disassociate being an athlete with being a human. There's a demand to play at all costs.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** That's Dr. Kelly Schloredt. She's the director of psychological services for U-Dub Athletics. She implemented the suicide prevention training program that helped support the team.

**Kelly Schloredt:** The University of Washington suicide prevention training is called LEARN Saves Lives. It's a training that was developed by a group here at the University of Washington, Forefront. And Forefront is a center of excellence for suicide prevention.

LEARN helps student athletes and coaches and staff to have what can be a really difficult conversation with someone. Typically, what prevents people from having those conversations is they don't know where to begin.

The thing that brings me the greatest hope is people coming together and having more and more conversation about mental health. And the more that student athletes do that, and the more they have a good experience in doing that, it just creates a space that other student athletes want to do it as well.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** Maya is one of the students who participated in the LEARN Saves Lives program.

**Maya Loudd:** It was hard to talk about her, but it was something that needed to happen. We got to practice having these conversations amongst each other. It's important to learn the right language to use, the correct way to approach somebody in a respectful way, to help them potentially in a situation that could be life-threatening for them.

I learned that the best thing to do in these situations is just to listen, be someone that they feel comfortable sharing with, but not putting them in a situation where they feel like they need to share too much. And just emphasizing that you're there for them and you're someone that they can talk to.

My teammates, they're all of my best friends. We had to lean on each other. We had to learn to be vulnerable. This wasn't something that we could just sit with by ourselves.

**Gabriela Domenzain:** Maya told us about how the team rallied at the end of their season to honor Mia's memory on the field.



**Maya Loudd:** After her passing, we had to go on and play in the Big Ten tournament final game just two days later.

It gave us an opportunity to play for something more and honor her because she was an amazing soccer player, and we knew that's what she would've wanted us to be doing. She would want us to go out there, give it our all, play our best.

**Audio from the game announcer:** Shoots, and she scores!

**Maya Loudd:** We ended up winning in penalty kicks, which was really a surreal moment for a lot of us. As a goalkeeper, she was known for amazing penalty kick saves. It really, truly felt like on that day that she was with us on the field and she brought us that title.

Following that, we went on a fantastic post-season run. We had her orange ribbon on our jerseys that we would look to before every game.

I truly can't express how much I appreciate our staff and our coaches and everyone around us. They gave us a space to grieve. They gave us time. They gave us the option to do what we needed and what was best for ourselves. A lot of us haven't experienced a loss like this in our lives, so just them being there and saying that they were there for us truly meant a lot.

And I think approaching conversations in a space that there's no judgment is super important. As, especially, an upperclassman, I think putting on a brave face wasn't always what was needed in that situation. I think showing vulnerability was important.

I hope that other student athletes understand that you don't have to sit with this weight of all these things by yourself. I hope that they understand that it doesn't show a sign of weakness for wanting to take care of your mental health. And there's so many resources and people in your circle that are willing to help you and want to help you.

Today is actually Mia's 22nd birthday. Tonight, as a team, we are having a potluck at the house that she lived in. We're just incorporating all of Mia's favorite things. We're going to have egg rolls, we're going to have all of her favorite candies and desserts, and we're really just going to take a moment to celebrate her because we love to celebrate her any opportunity that we get.

We're going to have fun talking about our favorite memories with her and things that she loved and really just continuing to remember her and talk about her legacy and how amazing she was as a person.



**Gabriela Domenzain:** The Huskies' story highlights the importance of prevention when it comes to mental health.

Dealing with intense grief, loss, or stress can worsen mental health symptoms, and by ensuring resources are available, people going through difficult times can get the help they need, and we can possibly save a life.

Thanks for listening. If you or someone you know needs help, please call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988, or visit [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) and click on the chat button.

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For The Pew Charitable Trusts, I'm Gabriela Domenzain, and this is "After the Fact."