

Julius Caesar

2026-27 Study Guide

ABOUT THIS STUDY GUIDE

The Colorado Shakespeare Festival will soon share a Shakespeare & Violence Prevention project with your school. This study guide is a resource for you, whether you are an administrator, counselor, teacher, or student. Our program is most successful when participants have prepared in advance, so we encourage you to use this study guide to connect the material to your curriculum. Shakespeare offers a wonderful opportunity to explore meaningful questions, and we encourage you and your students to engage deeply with those questions.

This study guide was written and edited by Dr. Amanda Giguere and Dr. Heidi Schmidt, with input from the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado's Office of Suicide Prevention, CU Boulder's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Safe2Tell, CU Department of Theatre & Dance, and Josue Miranda (Spanish translator).

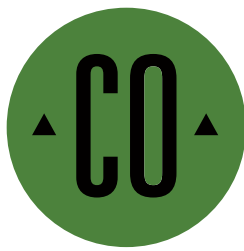
COLORADO CURRICULUM STANDARDS

This program was developed with a standards-based focus in multiple content areas. Content areas addressed by the performances, classroom workshops, and the contents of this study guide include:

- Reading, Writing, and Communicating
- Drama and Theatre Arts
- Comprehensive Health
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Colorado Essential Skills
- School Counseling Standards

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SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

ABOUT SHAKESPEARE & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The **Colorado Shakespeare Festival (CSF)** partners with CU Boulder's **Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV)** and the **Department of Theatre & Dance** to create an interdisciplinary program that increases awareness of Shakespeare and violence prevention.

Our actors will visit your school to perform an abridged, three-actor version of *Julius Caesar* that explores the cycle of violence, using research from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence. In a 45-50 minute performance and a 50-minute classroom workshop, we draw parallels between Shakespeare's world and our own. We recommend the performance for grades 6-12.

Theatre is about teamwork, empathy, and change. When your students watch the play, they will observe warning signs, planned attacks, and characters who try to solve their problems with violence. They'll see examples of isolated people in a disconnected world, people who are recruited and radicalized to acts of violence, and people who try to take action as "upstanders" - people who make the choice to help others. We hope this production opens up a dialogue about the cycle of violence, while reminding us that change is always possible.

The post-show classroom workshops, facilitated by actors from the performance, use theatre activities to increase your students' ability to work as a team and be upstanders. We employ empathy-building and team-building activities, key elements in creating a positive school environment.

Our visit to your school aims to inspire your students with live, professional theatre, but the work does not end when our actors depart. We encourage you to continue this conversation after our visit to create positive change in your own school.

ABOUT JULIUS CAESAR

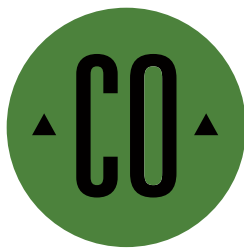
Why this play? *Julius Caesar* centers on the planned assassination of a political figure, the ensuing civil war, and deaths by suicide of the plotters. Caesar's power in Rome is growing, and some Romans are worried. Cassius is frustrated and tired of living in the shadow of Rome's leader. Brutus fears that Caesar's growing power will harm their country. Preying on Brutus' concerns, Cassius recruits his friend in plotting Caesar's assassination. Despite many warning signs, the plotters succeed, the public murder of Caesar plunges Rome into civil war, and violence begets violence. In the midst of a losing battle, Brutus and Cassius both find themselves in a seemingly hopeless situation, and they die by suicide. Antony is left to pick up the pieces of a collapsed Rome.

While the events of the play are extreme, Shakespeare's nuanced language offers a complex exploration of the characters' emotional lives. Rather than villainizing, glorifying, or judging any roles, Shakespeare depicts human beings facing hard situations, many of whom lack the emotional awareness to move through challenging feelings. *Julius Caesar* speaks to current trends in recruitment and radicalization to violence, the consequences of planned attacks, and the harmful impacts of isolation and disconnection. The play depicts many risk factors: isolation, poor mental health, association with delinquent peers, and suicidal ideation.

Shakespeare's plays invite students to explore complex situations through the safety of metaphor. We have all felt frustrated, overlooked, desperate, and perhaps tempted to lash out. How can these plays be opportunities to get some space between these feelings and our responses? It's okay to feel frustrated, but how do we avoid violent solutions? If we notice concerning behavior among our peer group, where can we turn for help? How can we be upstanders for ourselves or our peers?

Three-Person Cast Shakespeare's version of this play has more than 40 characters; we combined some roles and eliminated others to focus on 8 characters played by 3 actors. Pay attention to how actors change character along the way.

Bilingual Shakespeare In this production, some characters speak occasionally in Spanish. Shakespeare belongs to all of us, and we hope that when you see a Spanish-speaking character, this helps you see Shakespeare's ability to cross boundaries and connect people from different backgrounds. Whether or not you speak Spanish, how does this choice impact the way you listen to the play?



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CONTENT WARNING

Julius Caesar is a play about a planned attack in a public setting, and the storyline involves the deaths of two characters by suicide. This content may be triggering to some members of your school community. (Note: no guns are used in this production, though there are some moments of simulated violence involving prop knives / daggers. If you have questions or would like to discuss this further, please reach out to csfedout@colorado.edu.)

We encourage you to have conversations with your students prior to the performance, particularly students who may have been personally impacted by recent trauma. Please work with your students to make the most appropriate decisions for them regarding viewing the performance and participating in post-show workshops.

CSF can provide the script and lesson plan in advance if you are concerned about a particular topic.

If you are concerned about a student, below are some resources:

Resources

- **Counseling team** at your school
- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.** Provides 24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States. Call “988” or visit www.988lifeline.org
- **Ayuda en Español.** Lifeline ofrece 24/7, gratuito servicios en español, no es necesario hablar inglés si usted necesita ayuda. Cuando usted llama al número 1-888-628-9454, su llamada se dirige al centro de ayuda de nuestra red disponible más cercano.
- **Safe2Tell** (anonymous reporting, connects with local law enforcement and other resources): 1-877-542-7233; www.safe2tell.org
- **Cyberbullying Research Center** (resources, research, and presentations about cyberbullying, directed by Dr. Sameer Hinduja and Dr. Justin W. Patchin): cyberbullying.org
- **Handouts.** This study guide also includes information and handouts on Standing up to Cyberbullying (pg. 13) and Mental Health & Suicide Prevention (pg. 14-16).

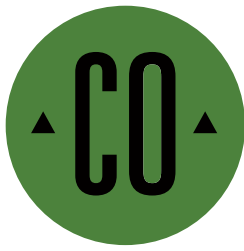
PROTECTIVE FACTORS: PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE AND SUICIDE

- Sufficient Sleep
- Supportive relationships
- Feeling connected to peers, school, family, and community
- Involvement in prosocial activities
- Having a trusted adult
- Feeling safe at school



SAFE2TELL provides students, parents, and community members a safe and anonymous way to report information about any issues that concern their safety or the safety of others. You can use your voice to make the life of someone else better. Sometimes if YOU don't speak up for someone, no one else will. You can make a difference. Safe2Tell will not ask for your name or contact information when you make a report. Safe2Tell sends the report to the school who then looks into the safety concern.

REPORT: (877) 542-7233 | safe2tell.org | Mobile app | Text S2TCO to 738477



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MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION, RADICALIZATION

In *Julius Caesar*, several characters are persuaded to engage in violent acts using distorted, incomplete, or unreliable information. These actions cause a lot of harm. As you watch the play, look for these moments and ask yourself how the characters might have prevented the harm. In the play, misinformation and disinformation are spread person to person. Radicalized content, gossip, clickbait, online scams, fake photos, and other biased or questionable information can be spread using different methods, but they often rely on the same human impulse to believe our eyes and our ears.

Tips / Questions to Ask Yourself:

- **How does it make you feel?** Misinformation and disinformation are “sticky” because they generate a strong emotional reaction. If you have strong feelings (particularly anger or fear) when you hear/see a piece of information, it’s probably a good idea to step back and try to evaluate it critically or intellectually instead of just trusting your emotions.
- **Consider the source.** Who made / shared this with you? What’s their motivation, bias, or agenda? Are they trustworthy? Are they in a position to really know what they say they know?
- **Can this be verified?** Online, check out the creator’s account, the website’s “About Us” section (are they a legitimate news site? Or a joke site?), etc. Sites like snopes.com or factcheck.org can be helpful for confirming accuracy. In person, can you confirm or dispel the rumor directly?
- **What’s the impact?** Who benefits from this information? Who might be harmed?

Misinformation is inaccurate or false information shared in good faith
Disinformation is inaccurate or false information created or shared with intent to deceive
Misinformation is a **Mistake**. **Disinformation** is **Deliberate**.

CYBERBULLYING

(from the Cyberbullying Research Center)

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior. Cyberbullying has unique concerns in that it can be:

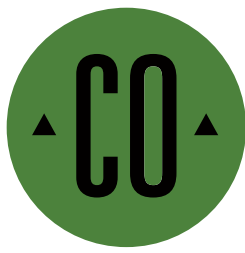
Persistent – Digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief.

Permanent – Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact college admissions, employment, and other areas of life.

Hard to Notice – Because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We honor and acknowledge that the Colorado Shakespeare Festival resides on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations. We recognize the sophisticated and intricate knowledge systems Indigenous people have developed in relationship to their lands and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land. You can learn more about the original inhabitants where you live by searching your (or your school's) address at native-land.ca



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How Do I Prepare?

TEACHER CHECKLIST

This might be your students' first exposure to theatre and/or Shakespeare, so we recommend establishing some norms with your students to prepare for this program:

- In theatre, actors are vulnerable onstage; they step into the shoes of another character (metaphorically) and help us see the world from another person's perspective. For actors to do their jobs, they need to know that their audience will respect their work, their bravery, and their honesty.
- We will respect the actors, we will respect one another, and we will respect ourselves. How do we cultivate a classroom of mutual respect?
- Trying new things is hard! When we work with CSF actors, we might be asked to step out of our comfort zone and participate in some activities. Let's support one another for being brave, being honest, and for trying new things.
- The Shakespeare & Violence Prevention post-performance workshops emphasize three key ideas: Teamwork, Empathy, and Change. What do these things have in common? How can we prepare ourselves to work as a team, practice empathy, and rehearse the change we'd like to see in our community?

How do I prepare my students for the play?

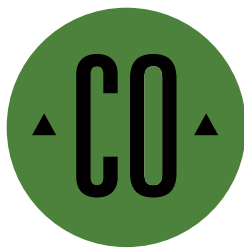
- ☐ Review Plot & Characters Overview (pg. 6) with your students.
- ☐ Use the Mini-Lesson Plan (pg. 8), Anticipation Guide and Text Analysis activities (pg. 9-10), and Things to Look For (pg. 11) to help your students think through some of the big questions presented in *Julius Caesar* in advance of the performance.
- ☐ Discuss appropriate theatre etiquette with your students. Our performance is frequently interactive (like Shakespeare's original performances). Students are encouraged to laugh and applaud when they enjoy the show, though we ask them not to have private conversations, use cell phones, eat during the performance, or otherwise distract the performers or their fellow students. Remind them that just as they can see and hear the actors, the actors can also see and hear the audience.

How do I prepare for post-show workshops?

- ☐ Be ready to participate and co-facilitate with our teaching artist. The more involved you are, the more your students learn!
- ☐ Talk with your class about the upcoming actor-led theatre workshop. Set expectations about trying new things and respecting one another.
- ☐ Push desks/chairs to the side of your classroom to create an open, movement-friendly space.
- ☐ At the end of the workshop, our teaching artist will step out of the room while you conduct an anonymous, 3-question poll with your students. Don't worry about preparing - they'll give you a card with the questions pre-printed.

What should I do after the visit?

- ☐ Take the 5-minute survey in your thank you email to give us feedback on the program.
- ☐ Use the Discussion Questions (pg. 12) to have a follow-up discussion with your students about the performance and the workshops.
- ☐ Look for ways to integrate the ideas and questions raised in the Shakespeare & Violence Prevention program into your lesson plans throughout the year.



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Plot & Characters



BRUTUS

A powerful Roman who is concerned by Caesar's growing influence.



JULIUS CAESAR

A popular leader in Rome - maybe too popular?



CASSIUS

Another powerful Roman who recruits his friend Brutus into a plot against Caesar.



SOOTHSAYER

A fortuneteller who attempts to warn Caesar about the impending danger.

Caesar's power and popularity are growing, which concerns many high-ranking Romans, including Brutus and Cassius. A Soothsayer (fortuneteller) warns Caesar to "beware the Ides of March." Caesar ignores the Soothsayer.

In a stormy night of unnatural events, Cassius convinces Brutus that Caesar is too powerful and is a threat to Rome's continued freedom and peace. Cassius persuades Brutus to help him assassinate Caesar. Portia, Brutus' wife, is concerned about his changing behavior and implores him to confide in her.



PORTIA

Wife and confidante to Brutus.



MARK ANTONY

Caesar's friend who rouses the mob against the conspirators.



CINNA

A poet who is attacked by an angry mob.

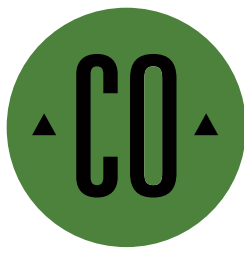
The conspirators kill Caesar. Shortly after the attack, Brutus permits Mark Antony to deliver a funeral speech. Antony uses this speech to rouse a mob of citizens against the conspirators (and an innocent, Cinna the Poet).

What consequences will Brutus and Cassius face for killing Caesar? How will this action ripple through Rome? Will the violence bring peace or more violence?



SWING / STAGE MANAGER

Marisa is a "swing," or understudy. She has learned all the roles in this production so if someone gets sick, Marisa can perform in their place! Marisa is also our stage manager. She does a lot of work backstage to make sure this performance goes well.



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Meet the Director

What does a director do?

A director helps to bring all the elements of a production together to tell a clear story. With *Julius Caesar*, this means I was in charge of deciding which characters and plot points are the most important for telling you this story and cutting Shakespeare's 2 1/2 hour play down to 45 minutes. Sometimes, especially with Shakespeare, this means applying a "concept" to a production - this means selecting a time and place that can help lift up the most important or relevant elements of a play. I collaborate with the designers and the actors to bring this story to life for our audience - YOU.

***Julius Caesar* is a 400-year-old play about a 2000-year-old event. Why do you think we're still performing it?**

I hope you all have your own answers to this question after watching the play. When directing Shakespeare plays for this project (Shakespeare & Violence Prevention), I always try to find a connection between how people in Shakespeare's world experienced violence and how we do today. Shakespeare may have lived 400 years ago, but he really understood human behavior. It's easy to look at *Julius Caesar* as a political play with lots of rhetoric, which might not feel all that relevant. But another word for politics is power, and another word for rhetoric is persuasion - we still seek power and attempt to persuade people to our point of view, or to do things for us. The tools may have evolved, but the behavior hasn't.

What moment in the play do you find most appealing as a director?

It's hard to pick just one, but I'm really interested in Portia's journey. We see her with Brutus, and her language tells us that their relationship has soured - it used to be pretty solid, but he's shutting her out now and she's pleading with him to tell her what's going on. The next time we see her, she's on the street waiting for news. I think she knows what Brutus is planning and is making an unbearable decision about whether to report him or not. How many other significant others, siblings, friends, and parents have to make that decision when they are afraid someone they love is planning something unthinkable?

What is challenging about directing a 3 actor version of *Julius Caesar*?

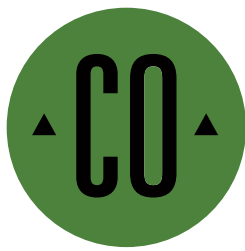
I love the challenge of telling a story with this kind of minimal set, costumes, and cast - it forces you to think creatively as a director. I think the hardest part is managing the technical needs of all of these quick costume changes without losing the emotional weight of these characters' choices and their consequences. As a team, we really have to trust you, as our audience, to use your imagination and meet us halfway.



HEIDI SCHMIDT (she/her) is the Resident Dramaturg and Assistant Director of Outreach at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. Heidi has directed, dramaturged, and taught for CSF and many other theatre companies in the Denver/Boulder area. She has worked with CSF's Outreach programs for 16 years and holds a PhD in Theatre from CU Boulder.

YOUTH VIOLENCE & MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

- 5% of students in this country miss school each day because of bullying. That translates to 160,000 students missing school daily.
- 57% of the time, bullying stops in 10 seconds or less when a bystander becomes an upstander.
- 11.1% of high school students and 17% of middle school students seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- 28.4% had a friend tell them they had thoughts of suicide one or more times in the last 12 months.
- 73.9% of high school students have experienced the death of a family member or close friend.
- More info: stopbullying.gov, 2023 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey



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Mini-Lesson Plan Before the Performance

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Rationale: These mini-lessons will introduce students to the plot, characters, and themes of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival's production of *Julius Caesar*, and prepare them to take part in a Shakespeare & Violence Prevention workshop with a CSF actor.

Objective: Students will be able to discuss and defend their opinions about key themes; analyze text from the play; and use persuasive language to adapt a passage from the play.

Instructions: Use this study guide to introduce the characters, plot, and themes in *Julius Caesar* to your students. You may also wish to review the mental health warning signs on pg. 11.

Share the handouts on page 9-10 with your students. Encourage students to answer questions individually or in pairs, and then share responses in larger groups. Invite your students to ask follow-up questions when their peers share a response.

COLORADO CURRICULUM STANDARDS

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/standards>

Reading, Writing and Communicating: Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening

- Prepared Graduates: collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully; pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others; and contribute ideas to further the group's attainment of an objective

Reading, Writing and Communicating: Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes

- Prepared Graduates: read a wide range of literary texts to build knowledge and to better understand the human experience

Drama and Theatre Arts: Standard 3: Critically Respond

- Perceive and analyze artistic work
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work
- Connect artistic experiences to our world; past, present and future

Comprehensive Health: Standard 4: Prevention and Risk Management

- Prepared Graduates: apply knowledge and skills that promote healthy, violence-free relationships

ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS

SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) Core Competencies <https://casel.org>

- Self Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision-Making
- Relationship Skills

Colorado Essential Skills

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/essentialskills-pdf>

- Self-awareness
- Personal responsibility
- Adaptability/flexibility
- Perseverance / resilience
- Critical thinking / problem-solving
- Creativity / innovation
- Inquiry / analysis
- Informed risk taking
- Collaboration / teamwork
- Cultural awareness
- Civic engagement
- Leadership

School Counseling Standards (American School Counselor Association, www.schoolcounselor.org)

- Mindset standards: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being / Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment
- Behavior Standards: Ethical decision-making and social responsibility / Social Skills / Empathy / Positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them

NAME: _____

ACTIVITY 1: ANTICIPATION GUIDE

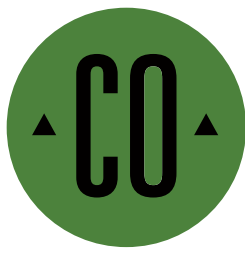
STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER WITH AN EXAMPLE
A group of people can easily change the opinion of an individual.			
A planned act of violence always has warning signs.			
If someone confides in you, you must keep that information confidential.			
Violent words or actions always lead to more violence.			
Words are more powerful than actions.			
A crowd is more powerful than an individual.			
Power is always a dangerous thing.			
A good leader puts the needs of the people ahead of their personal needs.			
When you know that something dangerous is going to happen, you have a duty to try to prevent it.			

ACTIVITY 2: ANALYZING AND ADAPTING TEXTS

Step 4: Share your version of the speech with your class and discuss how the choices made by each student / group impacts the overall impact of the speech. Why did you make the choices you did?

Rhetorical appeals	Some Rhetorical Devices
• Credibility / Character (<i>ethos</i>) - you can trust me! • Logic (<i>logos</i>) - persuasion through reason • Emotion (<i>pathos</i>) - fear, love, hatred, hope, empathy	• Repetition • Hyperbole (exaggeration) • Metaphor / Simile (comparison) • Rhetorical question (not really asking - just making a point)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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During the Performance: Things to Look For

- Warning signs
- A power imbalance
- Someone confiding in another person
- Someone keeping secrets
- A planned attack
- Manipulation through peer pressure
- An opportunity to speak up and prevent harm
- Moments of empathy
- Someone who's isolated
- A strong, supportive relationship
- An angry mob
- A persuasive speech
- Moments of reconciliation
- A character attempting to solve a problem with violence
- Words used as weapons
- A character asking questions or stopping to think before making an important decision

Warning Signs

During the performance, watch and listen for moments when a character is not okay, or might be on the verge of hurting themselves or others. Here are some examples of behaviors that might be reason for concern:

MENTAL HEALTH

- having lost interest in things
- having low energy
- sleeping too much or too little
- spending more and more time alone
- engaging in self-harm
- having little to no interest in engaging with peers
- struggling academically or experiencing a decline in grades

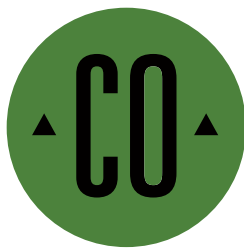
SUICIDE

- talking about feeling hopeless
- having a lack of relationships and social support
- talking about wanting to die, kill oneself, or having no reason to live
- sleeping too little or too much
- seeing a local cluster of suicides

- having impulsive or aggressive tendencies
- experiencing a mental disorder (e.g., anxiety, depression, schizophrenia)

VIOLENCE

- threatening to harm another or expressing an intent to attack
- expressing intense or escalating anger
- experiencing sadness, depression, or isolation
- having an interest in weapons
- changing appearance or behavior
- attempting suicide and/or engaging in self-harm
- expressing an interest in violence
- speaking of suffering from or having suffered from aggressive bullying
- declining grades or attendance
- harassing others



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After the Performance: Discussion Questions

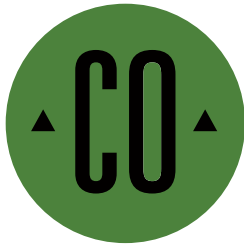
1. **Secrets.** What kinds of secrets are shared or kept in the play? Research shows that in 81% of planned violence, someone other than the perpetrator knew it was going to happen. Which characters in the play knew about the planned attack on Caesar before it happened? Who had a chance to step in to prevent it, did they try, and why or why not?
2. **“Honor” and “Nobility”** appear frequently in Shakespeare’s plays. What did it mean in Shakespeare’s day to be “noble” or “honorable”? How has the meaning of these words changed?
3. **“The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power.”** What does it mean to separate remorse and power, and what might that mean for a leader? Or for a citizen of Rome? Or for you within your school or community?
4. **“Speak hands for me!”** Casca shouts this just before he stabs Caesar (we’ve given this line to Cassius because of our limited cast size). What does it mean to replace words with actions? Can our hands speak kindness instead of the violence of this moment?
5. **“For who so firm that cannot be seduced.”** In the play we see many examples of persuasion. What are the tools and strategies the characters use to persuade (or manipulate) other characters to do things they might not normally do?
6. **“Such men as he be never at heart’s ease whiles they behold a greater than themselves.”** This is how Caesar describes Cassius. What does this line mean to you? How can you and your peers find “heart’s ease” when someone else has something you want for yourself? How do you handle envy? Is it a zero sum game (meaning if they win, I lose)? Or can we learn to be comfortable and happy with someone else’s successes?
7. **What were some examples** of positive, supportive relationships in the play?
8. **What were some examples** of negative, unsupportive relationships?
9. **Warning signs.** Shakespeare’s play includes a lot of signs and omens (such as weird weather, strange animal behavior, religious messages from Roman gods, and some human behavior) that things were not right in Rome prior to Caesar’s assassination. If you were a citizen of Rome, what might have tipped you off that something dangerous was about to happen? What warning signs might you see in your world that indicate something dangerous could happen?
10. **Make your own cutting.** Read the full play, and imagine you will cut the play down to 45 minutes. Discuss what you would leave out and what you would need to keep. What do you see as the heart of the play?
11. **Public Self / Private Self.** Can you think of an example in *Julius Caesar* when a character changes their behavior or puts on a different version of themselves because they’re in public view? Is this healthy or unhealthy? Where and when are you comfortable being your private, vulnerable self? What makes that feel safe for you?
12. ***Julius Caesar* is a play without clear heroes,** and the audience is left with no character to root for - just people making mistakes, choosing violence, and getting stuck. What is the value of watching a play in which characters make mistakes? Do you learn more from a play in which characters behave badly, or in which characters behave well?
13. **What is empathy?** Why is it important? How might empathy have changed the outcomes in the play?
14. **Actors use teamwork** to trust one another when they are onstage. How is teamwork useful in school?
15. **How could you apply** what you’ve learned here in your school? How could you apply this outside of school? If you were aware that someone planned to harm others, how could you safely take action?

**Colorado Shakespeare Festival
Education Programs**

coloradoshakes.org/education
csfedout@colorado.edu
(303) 735-1181

**Center for the Study and Prevention
of Violence**

colorado.edu/cspv
(303) 492-1032



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Standing up to Cyberbullying

Top Ten Tips for Teens

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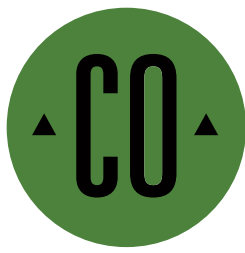
Don't be a bystander -- stand up to cyberbullying when you see it. Take action to stop something that you know is wrong. These **Top Ten Tips** will give you specific ideas of what **you can do** when you witness cyberbullying.

- 1. REPORT TO SCHOOL.** If the person being cyberbullied is someone from your school, report it to your school. Many have anonymous reporting systems to allow you to let them know what you are seeing without disclosing your identity.
- 2. COLLECT EVIDENCE.** Take a screenshot, save the image or message, or screen-record what you see. It will be easier for an adult to help if they can see -- and have proof of -- exactly what was being said.
- 3. REPORT TO SITE / APP / GAME.** All reputable online environments prohibit cyberbullying and provide easy tools to report violations. Don't hesitate to report; those sites/apps will protect your identity and not "out" you.
- 4. TALK TO A TRUSTED ADULT.** Develop relationships with adults you can trust and count on to help when you (or a friend) experience something negative online. This could be a parent, teacher, counselor, coach, or family friend.
- 5. DEMONSTRATE CARE.** Show the person being cyberbullied that they are not alone. Send them an encouraging text or snap. Take them aside at school and let them know that you have their back.
- 6. WORK TOGETHER.** Gather your other friends and organize a full-court press of positivity. Post kind comments on their wall or under a photo they've posted. Encourage others to help report the harm. There is strength in numbers.
- 7. TELL THEM TO STOP.** If you know the person who is doing the cyberbullying, tell them to knock it off. Explain that it's not cool to be a jerk to others. But say something -- if you remain silent, you are basically telling them that it is ok to do it.
- 8. DON'T ENCOURAGE IT.** If you see cyberbullying happening, don't support it in any way. Don't forward it, don't add emojis in the comments, don't gossip about it with your friends, and don't stand on the sidelines.
- 9. STAY SAFE.** Don't put yourself in harm's way. When your emotions are running high, resist posting something that may escalate the situation. Don't hang out online where most people are cruel. Never physically threaten others.
- 10. DON'T GIVE UP.** Think creatively about what can be done to stop cyberbullying. Brainstorm with others and use everyone's talents to do something epic!

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Mental Health and Suicide Prevention: How to Talk to Children and Youth

Office of Suicide Prevention, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment

A suicide death is a traumatic and difficult loss, and the impact of suicide can leave grieving individuals and communities with questions. One of the first questions people often ask is: Why? Why did this person die by suicide?

Suicide is always a complex issue: There is never just one reason why someone will attempt or die by suicide. Learning about a young person's death by suicide often evokes complicated feelings and raises an additional question: How should we talk with children and youth about mental health and suicide prevention?

It is important that adults establish open communication with children and youth to ask about their emotions, their worries, and what gives them hope. Being able to talk about complex and challenging emotions is a way to build and strengthen resilience, coping skills, and connections to caring, trusted adults. Although it can be scary, normalizing these conversations and being empathetic listeners can be the most important first step we can take in preventing suicides among children and youth and in supporting good mental health.

KEY TERMS

Child: those younger than age 12

Youth: those between ages 13 and 18

Young adults: those between 19 and 24

Young people: all of the above

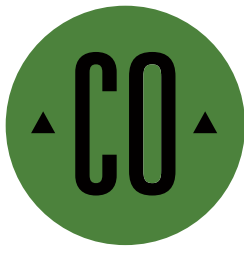
Understanding youth stressors

As parents, caregivers, and trusted adults, we can support youth and children with the stressors they face on a daily basis, and that, in rare circumstances, may contribute to suicidal behaviors and attempts. For a young person, factors that could contribute to a suicidal crisis might include a combination of the following:

- stress.
- feeling socially isolated.
- lack of sleep or irregular sleeping patterns.
- exposure to bullying.
- mental health conditions.
- adverse childhood experiences and traumatic experiences.
- discrimination about one's identity (gender identity and/or sexual orientation).
- periods of transition.
- economic stressors.

How to listen and offer support

In order to have open conversations around mental health with young people, it is important to show that we are listening: Ask questions that show we care, validate emotions, help build problem-solving skills (which is different from solving their problems for them), and make space and time for ongoing conversations.



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During these conversations, ask open-ended questions about mental health and listen closely and openly to the responses. Possible questions can be:

- Do you ever get sad or lonely? What do you do to feel better?
- Do you ever feel stressed? What do you do to feel less stressed out?
- Do you or your friends ever talk about hurting yourselves or wanting to die?

Sleep is an often overlooked stressor, and lack of sleep or irregular sleeping patterns can be a risk factor for suicide. Ample sleep can protect young people from many negative health consequences. Adults can support a young person's mental health by creating and maintaining healthy sleeping habits. It is recommended that children between the ages of 7 and 12 get 10-11 hours of sleep each night. Adults can help support a healthy sleeping environment by limiting access to social media at night, or by establishing routines that help ensure that a child or youth is getting the appropriate amount of sleep. Getting enough sleep is important for the mental well-being of people of any age!

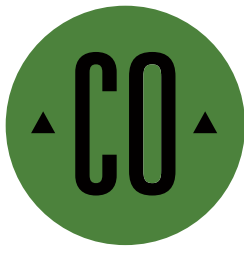
Knowing the warning signs and life-saving resources

Although suicide attempts and suicide deaths among youth and children are rare, even one death by suicide is too many. In order to prevent children and youth suicide attempts and deaths, it is important to be aware of the following potential warning signs that can indicate that the young person is severely depressed or having thoughts of suicide:

- Expressing unbearable emotional pain, feeling trapped, or hopelessness.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Talking or posting on social media about suicide or wanting to die.
- Suddenly becoming calm or cheerful after a long period of depression.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves.
- Telling people "good-bye."
- Saying they wish they could fall asleep and never wake up, or that everyone would be better off without them.
- Change in sleeping patterns (including sleeping too much or too little).

If you are concerned about possible suicide risk for anyone, including a young person, please ask that person if they are thinking of hurting themselves or are having thoughts of suicide. Research clearly shows that talking or asking about suicide will not put the idea of suicide in their head. It shows that you are concerned about them and willing to help. Direct questions like, "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" or "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" are straightforward and ask for a clear yes/no answer.

If someone responds "yes," it is important to listen to their emotions and for information about a possible plan, including if the individual has identified how, where, and when they may attempt suicide. When an individual has specific plans regarding suicide, this can indicate a higher risk. No matter the level of specificity, it is important to connect an individual who is considering suicide with a mental health provider or mental health resources as soon as possible.



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If you are concerned that a loved one is struggling with a mental health crisis, is having thoughts of suicide, or if you just have a gut feeling that something is off, please call or text 988 (or visit [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)), 24/7/365.

Safer Environments Reduce Suicide Risk

When we consider how to reduce suicide risk, especially when someone is in a mental health crisis, a crucial first step is to reduce access to lethal means. Many suicide attempts occur with little planning during a short-term crisis, and ensuring that an environment is as safe as possible is essential in preventing potential suicide deaths.

Suicide attempts by firearms are particularly lethal. The majority of firearms used in youth suicides belong to a parent. Securing firearms or temporarily storing them away from the home greatly reduces the risk of a child or youth dying by suicide using a firearm. Safely and securely storing medications and substances also reduces risk. It is also important to continue to be aware of the individual and their environment. If an individual has shared that they are thinking about suicide, learning more about this despair and if they have a plan can also provide important information on how to keep an environment as safe as possible for that individual and everyone else.

In It Together

The best suicide prevention is comprehensive and collaborative. The more that people, organizations, and communities work together to support positive mental health, coping skills, resiliency, and openness around discussing suicide and mental health, the better the result for everyone, including young people. Talking about suicide with those we care about can feel scary, but there are resources in Colorado to help support you, your family, and your community.

Helpful Resources:

Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention: www.coosp.org

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call or text “988” or visit www.988lifeline.org.

The Trevor Project: www.thetrevorproject.org (for LGBTQ+ youth)

Colorado School Safety Resource Center: www.colorado.gov/cssrc

The Second Wind Fund: www.thesecondwindfund.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Colorado: www.namicolorado.org

The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado: www.suicidepreventioncolorado.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention-CO Chapter: www.afsp.org/chapter/afsp-colorado

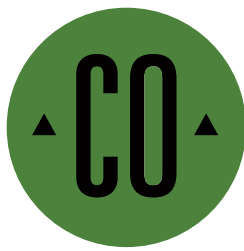
Mental Health Colorado: www.mentalhealthcolorado.org

The Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council: www.cbhc.org

Youth Mental Health First Aid: www.MHFACO.org

For more information, please visit the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention web page.

www.coosp.org



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Tips from CSPV

HOW TO BE AN UPSTANDER

- Refuse to join in if someone tries to get you to taunt and torment another person.
- Get a teacher, parent, or other responsible adult to come help. This isn't snitching. You are saying that you don't think bullying is acceptable and don't want anyone to get hurt.
- Try to get the person being bullied to tell a trusted adult. Offer to go with them.
- Tell a trusted adult yourself if the person being bullied is unwilling to report it. Do not let the person behaving as a bully know so that they do not become aggressive toward you.

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEYS

One of the most important components of a safe school is a climate where youth feel secure and supported in their learning environment. As part of the Safe Communities Safe Schools (SCSS) project, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence offers school climate surveys, at a low cost, with options for students, staff, and parents. For more information about our surveys or to administer any of the SCSS Surveys at your school, please contact us via email at cspv@colorado.edu or by phone at 303-492-1032.

<https://cspv.colorado.edu/surveys>

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"I can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks."

-Twelfth Night

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SHAKESPEARE & VIOLENCE PREVENTION: A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS



Shakespeare
& VIOLENCE PREVENTION
A Practical Handbook for Educators
AMANDA GIGUERE



Want to learn more about Violence Prevention and Shakespeare? This new book, authored by CSF Director of Outreach Amanda Giguere, explores 8 Shakespeare plays through the violence-prevention lens. Discover new strategies to approach Shakespeare as you learn about the overlaps between preventing violence and studying Shakespeare. The book includes an appendix of exercises, discussion questions, and activities to implement in the classroom.

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