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Blue light to stop Tokyo train suicides

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

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THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

Train companies in Tokyo are taking action to reduce the number of people jumping in front of trains. They are fitting blue lights on station platforms to try and create a more calming atmosphere. The East Japan Railway Company has invested almost \$170,000 to install the lights in all of the 29 stations on the capital's busy Yamanote Line. There has been an alarming rise in the number of people committing suicide at train stations. A total of 68 people threw themselves under trains in the year up to March. This compares with 42 suicides in the same period a year earlier. In 2008, Japan had nearly 2,000 suicides by jumping in front of a train; around six percent of all suicides nationwide. Suicides have risen sharply in the past decade due to poor economic conditions.

No one knows if the blue lights will work. There is no evidence to show that blue light reduces suicidal feelings. Keihan Railway spokesman Osamu Okawa stated: "We thought we had to do something to save lives. We know there is no scientific proof that blue lights deter suicides, but if blue has a soothing effect on the mind, we want to try it to save lives." The Associated Press news agency reports on a Japanese therapist called Mizuki Takahashi. She explained her reasons why the blue lights might be a good idea: "We associate the colour with the sky and the sea. It has a calming effect on agitated people, or people obsessed with one particular thing, which in this case is committing suicide," she said. Other companies are watching this experiment with interest.

WARM-UPS

1. SUICIDE: Walk around the class and talk to other students about suicide. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

train companies / taking action / calming atmosphere / capital cities / blue light / evidence / suicidal feelings / save lives / scientific proof / soothing effect / experiment

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. COLOUR: What effect does colour have on people? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you heard. Change and share again.

Colour	Effects
blue	
red	
green	
white	
pink	
black	

4. FEELINGS: Students A **strongly** believe colour changes our feelings; Students B **strongly** believe colour has zero effect on our feelings. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. SOOTHING EFFECT: Do these things soothe you? Rank them and share your rankings with your partner: 10 = this is super soothing; 1 = this is not at all soothing. Change partners and share your rankings. Change and share again.

- blue light
- music
- sitting on a sofa
- a massage
- meditating
- sitting on a beach
- reading
- taking a bath

6. BLUE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'blue'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE:

Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. A blue light can detect if people are going to take their own lives. | T / F |
| b. A railway in Japan has put blue lights in all of its stations. | T / F |
| c. More people threw themselves under Tokyo trains this year than last. | T / F |
| d. The article says late trains cause people to commit suicide in Japan. | T / F |
| e. Many scientific reports prove blue light reduces suicidal feelings. | T / F |
| f. A railway spokesman said he must try to use blue light to save lives. | T / F |
| g. A therapist said blue light does not calm people who feel suicidal. | T / F |
| h. Other companies would like to know if the blue light reduces suicides. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH:

Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. reduce | a. dramatically |
| 2. fitting | b. soothing |
| 3. atmosphere | c. discourage |
| 4. alarming | d. installing |
| 5. sharply | e. proof |
| 6. evidence | f. cut |
| 7. deter | g. link |
| 8. associate | h. observing |
| 9. calming | i. environment |
| 10. watching | j. worrying |

3. PHRASE MATCH:

(Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. taking | a. with the sky |
| 2. reduce the number | b. atmosphere |
| 3. create a more calming | c. effect |
| 4. people committing | d. particular thing |
| 5. due to poor | e. action |
| 6. blue light reduces | f. economic conditions |
| 7. We associate the colour | g. with interest |
| 8. It has a calming | h. of people |
| 9. people obsessed with one | i. suicidal feelings |
| 10. companies are watching this experiment | j. suicide |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Train companies in Tokyo are _____ action to reduce the number of people jumping in front of trains. They are fitting blue lights on station platforms to try and _____ a more calming atmosphere. The East Japan Railway Company has invested almost \$170,000 to install the lights in all of the 29 stations on the capital's _____ Yamanote Line. There has been an alarming _____ in the number of people committing suicide at train stations. A total of 68 people threw themselves _____ trains in the year up to March. This compares with 42 suicides in the same _____ a year earlier. In 2008, Japan had nearly 2,000 suicides by _____ in front of a train; around six percent of all suicides nationwide. Suicides have risen sharply in the past decade due to _____ economic conditions.

period

busy

poor

taking

under

jumping

create

rise

No one knows if the blue lights will _____. There is no evidence to show that blue light reduces suicidal _____. Keihan Railway spokesman Osamu Okawa stated: "We thought we had to do something to _____ lives. We know there is no scientific _____ that blue lights deter suicides, but if blue has a soothing _____ on the mind, we want to try it to save lives." The Associated Press news agency reports on a Japanese therapist called Mizuki Takahashi. She explained her _____ why the blue lights might be a good idea: "We associate the colour with the sky and the sea. It has a calming effect on agitated people, or _____ obsessed with one _____ thing, which in this case is committing suicide," she said. Other companies are watching this experiment with interest.

reasons

proof

feelings

particular

work

effect

save

people

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

Train companies in Tokyo are taking _____ the number of people jumping in front of trains. They are fitting blue lights on station platforms _____ a more calming atmosphere. The East Japan Railway Company has invested almost \$170,000 _____ in all of the 29 stations on the capital's busy Yamanote Line. There has been an alarming rise in the number of people committing suicide at train stations. A total of 68 people threw themselves under trains _____ March. This compares with 42 suicides in the same period a year earlier. In 2008, Japan had nearly 2,000 suicides by jumping _____; around six percent of all suicides nationwide. Suicides _____ the past decade due to poor economic conditions.

_____ blue lights will work. There is no evidence to show that blue light reduces suicidal feelings. Keihan Railway spokesman Osamu Okawa stated: "We _____ do something to save lives. We know there is no scientific proof that blue lights deter suicides, but if blue has a soothing _____, we want to try it to save lives." The Associated Press news agency reports on a Japanese therapist called Mizuki Takahashi. She explained _____ the blue lights might be a good idea: "We associate the colour with the sky and the sea. It has _____ agitated people, or people obsessed with one particular thing, which _____ committing suicide," she said. Other companies are watching this experiment with interest.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'commit' and 'suicide'.

commit	suicide

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• taking• create• busy• alarming• earlier• decade	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• evidence• proof• soothing• reasons• obsessed• interest
--	---

STUDENT SUICIDE SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

Write five GOOD questions about suicide in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

SUICIDE DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'suicide'?
- c) What do you think of this article?
- d) Are you surprised at the number of people committing suicide?
- e) Do you think the blue lights will work?
- f) What other things can we do to stop people taking their own lives?
- g) In many religions suicide is a sin. Do you agree?
- h) What are the biggest causes of suicide in your country?
- i) What would you do if you felt suicidal?
- j) Why is it only humans who end their own lives?

Blue light to stop Tokyo train suicides – 6th November, 2009
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SUICIDE DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think introducing the blue lights is a risk without scientific proof it will work?
- c) In Japan there are Internet sites where you can meet people to commit suicide with. What do you think of this?
- d) Why do you think suicide rates are higher in Finland and Sweden than in Spain and Italy?
- e) How would you stop someone from committing suicide?
- f) Do you think colour can change our feeling enough to deter suicide?
- g) How would a blue light at a railway station make you feel?
- h) Are you obsessed with one particular thing?
- i) Are people who commit suicide weak?
- j) What questions would you like to ask the train company bosses?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

Train companies in Tokyo are (1) ____ action to reduce the number of people jumping in front of trains. They are fitting blue lights on station platforms to try and create a (2) ____ calming atmosphere. The East Japan Railway Company has invested almost \$170,000 to install the lights in all of the 29 stations on the capital's busy Yamanote Line. There has been an (3) ____ rise in the number of people committing suicide at train stations. A total (4) ____ 68 people threw themselves under trains in the year up to March. This compares with 42 suicides in the same period a year (5) _____. In 2008, Japan had nearly 2,000 suicides by jumping in front of a train; around six percent of all suicides nationwide. Suicides have risen sharply in the past decade (6) ____ to poor economic conditions.

No one knows if the blue lights will (7) _____. There is no evidence to show that blue light reduces suicidal feelings. Keihan Railway spokesman Osamu Okawa stated: "We thought we had to do something to save lives. We know there is no scientific proof (8) ____ blue lights deter suicides, but if blue has a soothing effect on the mind, we want to try it to save lives." The Associated Press news agency reports on a Japanese (9) ____ called Mizuki Takahashi. She explained her reasons why the blue lights might be a good idea: "We (10) ____ the colour with the sky and the sea. It has a calming effect (11) ____ agitated people, or people obsessed with one particular thing, which in this case is committing suicide," she said. Other companies are watching this experiment with (12) _____.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) having | (b) making | (c) doing | (d) taking |
| 2. | (a) more | (b) many | (c) much | (d) most |
| 3. | (a) alarm bells | (b) alarming | (c) alarm | (d) alarmed |
| 4. | (a) from | (b) for | (c) of | (d) by |
| 5. | (a) early | (b) earliest | (c) earlier | (d) early bird |
| 6. | (a) of | (b) due | (c) because | (d) so |
| 7. | (a) do | (b) effect | (c) success | (d) work |
| 8. | (a) that | (b) what | (c) which | (d) this |
| 9. | (a) therapeutic | (b) therapist | (c) therapy | (d) therapies |
| 10. | (a) association | (b) associates | (c) associating | (d) associate |
| 11. | (a) in | (b) by | (c) on | (d) of |
| 12. | (a) interest | (b) interesting | (c) interesting | (d) interests |

WRITING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0911/091106-suicide.html>

Write about **suicide** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

[illegible]

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about this story. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. SUICIDE: Make a poster about suicide. Include different statistics from around the world. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. STOP: Write a magazine article about how to stop people committing suicide. Include imaginary interviews with a person who tried and a suicide expert.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to a railway boss. Ask him/her three questions about the blue lights. Give him/her three ideas on what (s)he could do to deter suicides at train stations. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. reduce | a. cut |
| 2. fitting | b. installing |
| 3. atmosphere | c. environment |
| 4. alarming | d. worrying |
| 5. sharply | e. dramatically |
| 6. evidence | f. proof |
| 7. deter | g. discourage |
| 8. associate | h. link |
| 9. calming | i. soothing |
| 10. watching | j. observing |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. taking | a. action |
| 2. reduce the number | b. of people |
| 3. create a more calming | c. effect |
| 4. people committing | d. suicide |
| 5. due to poor | e. economic conditions |
| 6. blue light reduces | f. suicidal feelings |
| 7. We associate the colour | g. with the sky |
| 8. It has a calming | h. atmosphere |
| 9. people obsessed with one | i. particular thing |
| 10. companies are watching this experiment | j. with interest |

GAP FILL:

Blue light to stop Tokyo train suicides

Train companies in Tokyo are **taking** action to reduce the number of people jumping in front of trains. They are fitting blue lights on station platforms to try and **create** a more calming atmosphere. The East Japan Railway Company has invested almost \$170,000 to install the lights in all of the 29 stations on the capital's **busy** Yamanote Line. There has been an alarming **rise** in the number of people committing suicide at train stations. A total of 68 people threw themselves **under** trains in the year up to March. This compares with 42 suicides in the same **period** a year earlier. In 2008, Japan had nearly 2,000 suicides by **jumping** in front of a train; around six percent of all suicides nationwide. Suicides have risen sharply in the past decade due to **poor** economic conditions.

No one knows if the blue lights will **work**. There is no evidence to show that blue light reduces suicidal **feelings**. Keihan Railway spokesman Osamu Okawa stated: "We thought we had to do something to **save** lives. We know there is no scientific **proof** that blue lights deter suicides, but if blue has a soothing **effect** on the mind, we want to try it to save lives." The Associated Press news agency reports on a Japanese therapist called Mizuki Takahashi. She explained her **reasons** why the blue lights might be a good idea: "We associate the colour with the sky and the sea. It has a calming effect on agitated people, or **people** obsessed with one **particular** thing, which in this case is committing suicide," she said. Other companies are watching this experiment with interest.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d 2 - a 3 - b 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - d 8 - a 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a