How to Help if You Think Someone Might be Suicidal

Recognize Warning Signs for Suicide Risk:
Remember that there is no typical suicidal person. Anyone can be thinking of killing themselves. Review some of the common warning signs that you can look for.

While there is no single predictor of suicide, there are some common warning signs to watch for. A suicidal person may:
  • Talk about suicide, death, and/or no reason to live.
  • Be preoccupied with death and dying.
  • Withdraw from friends and/or social activities.
  • Have a recent, severe loss (especially a relationship), or threat of a significant loss.
  • Experience drastic changes in behavior.
  • Lose interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
  • Prepare for death by making out a will (unexpectedly) and final arrangements.
  • Give away prized possessions.
  • Have attempted suicide before.
  • Take unnecessary risks; be reckless and/or impulsive.
  • Lose interest in their personal appearance.
  • Increase their use of alcohol or drugs.
  • Express a sense of hopelessness.
  • Be faced with a situation of humiliation or failure.
  • Have a history of violence or hostility.
  • Have been unwilling to "connect" with potential helpers.

Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide. Ask the person, "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" Don't lessen the reality of the situation by using phrases like "ending it all" or "going to sleep." Gently hold up for the person what kind of decision they are really making.

Listen to the person in crisis. Allow expressions of feelings, including feelings about wanting to die. Accept the feelings, even if they scare you. Let the person cry or scream if needed in order to get their feelings out.

Make a specific contract with the person to call you, a crisis line, or some other person or agency before they do anything to hurt or kill themselves. If the person won't make such a promise, it is not safe to leave them alone for any period of time. Make sure someone stays close by the person (in the same room, in visual contact) and get outside help immediately.

Don't say things like "It's not so bad" or **"Things will get better soon."** That invalidates the overwhelming feelings that the suicidal person is having and can cause them to feel very alone. Instead, try to say things like, "You feel so terrible right now that you can't see any way out other than killing yourself." That lets the suicidal person know that you can hear how desperate they feel.

Don't be judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life. Don't talk about suicide in judgmental terms, such as "doing something dumb."

Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support. Let the suicidal person know that you care about them.

Don't underestimate a threat of suicide. It's natural to want to believe that a friend or loved one

isn't at risk, but the fact is that people who threaten to commit suicide often do commit suicide. By the time friends and family become aware of the suicidal thoughts, the risk of suicide is often very high. Take the person seriously. Never dare the person to do it or tell the person that you don't think that they would be able to do it. Do not deny or minimize the idea that the person is serious.

Try not to act shocked. This will put distance between you and the suicidal person, and they may feel like you can't understand. Show them that you want to understand and that you are not going to turn away or reject how they feel.

Get support for yourself so that you will be able to support the suicidal person. Don't agree that you will keep their thoughts of suicide secret. Let them know that you will be there to love and support them, and that you will need to get more support for both of you. Don't try to handle a suicidal person by yourself. Bring in other friends or family or call a crisis hotline for support.

Try to find out how the person plans to kill himself or herself. Do they have a specific plan, with the time, day and/or method picked out? The more specific the plan, the greater the risk. Some methods of suicide tend to be more lethal than others. For example, if a suicidal person plans to use a firearm, that represents a very high level of risk. However, almost all methods carry serious risk. Remember that some over-the-counter medications, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), can be life-threatening, even in relatively small doses.

Remove the method, such as the gun, pills, or knife. Call law enforcement if there is immediate danger involved to yourself or to the person in crisis. For instance, you should not try to get a gun out of the hands of a suicidal person. You could end up harming both yourself and the other person. Law enforcement officers are trained to handle dangerous situations, and you should let them intervene.

Get help from experts. Call your local suicide or crisis hotline.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Text TALK to 741741 to text with a trained crisis counselor from the Crisis Text Line free 24/7.

Project HELP (Naples) Crisis HELP Line: 239-262-7227

Get in touch with a therapist or counselor who has experience working with suicidal clients. Most states have laws allowing for short-term, involuntary evaluation and hospitalization for people who demonstrate suicidal intent. In Florida, this law is called the "Baker Act." Suicide hotlines are often able to provide you with information and talk with you about what your options are.

The more you understand about what someone is going through when they are "in crisis," the easier it may be to find helpful things to say and do.

From 211bigbend.org
https://www.211bigbend.org/nationalsuicidepreventionlifeline