

## HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO FEELS SUICIDAL

If you are concerned about a friend who may be in emotional crisis or thinking of suicide, don't hesitate to reach out. There are a number of steps you can take to help ensure their safety.

### What You Can Do

#### » Know What to Watch For

Suicide preparedness is one of the best ways to ensure you'll be ready to help a friend who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts. Commit to learning the [symptoms of depression](#) and [warning signs of suicide](#). Learn about resources in your community including [mental health services](#). [The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) in the US is also a great resource to memorize and use if you are concerned about a friend. The phone number for the Crisis line is 988. Check out our [section on LGBTQ](#) to learn more about how you can help someone who is LGBTQ.

#### » Know What to Do

Stigma associated with mental illnesses can prevent people from getting help. Your willingness to talk about mental or emotional issues and suicide with a friend, family member, or co-worker can be the first step in getting them help and preventing suicide.

### If You See the Warning Signs of Suicide...

**Begin a dialogue by asking questions.** Suicidal thoughts are common with some mental illnesses and your willingness to talk about it in a non-judgmental, non-confrontational way can be the help a person needs to seek professional help. Questions okay to ask:

- “Do you ever feel so bad that you think about suicide?”
- “Do you have a plan to kill yourself or take your life?”
- “Have you thought about when you would do it (today, tomorrow, next week)?”
- “Have you thought about what method you would use?”

Asking these questions will help you to determine if your friend or family member is in immediate danger, and get help if needed. A suicidal person should see a doctor or mental health professional immediately. Calling **911** or going to a hospital emergency room are also good options to prevent a tragic suicide attempt or death. Calling the [Crisis & Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at **988** is also a resource for you or the person you care about. Remember, always take thoughts of or plans for suicide seriously.

**Never keep a plan for suicide a secret.** Don't worry about risking a friendship if you truly feel a life is in danger. You have bigger things to worry about—someone's life might be in danger! It is better to lose a relationship from violating a confidence than it is to go to a funeral. And most of the time they will come back and thank you for saving their life.

**Don't try to minimize problems or shame a person into changing their mind.** Your opinion of a person's situation is irrelevant. Trying to convince a person suffering with a mental illness that it's not that bad, or that they have everything to live for may only increase their feelings of guilt and hopelessness. Reassure them that help is available, that what they are experiencing is treatable, and that suicidal feelings are temporary. Life **can** get better!

**If you feel the person isn't in immediate danger, acknowledge the pain is legitimate and offer to work together to get help.** Make sure you follow through. This is one instance where you must be tenacious in your follow-up. Help find a doctor or a mental health professional, participate in making the first phone call, or go along to the first appointment. If you're in a position to help, don't assume that your persistence is unwanted or intrusive. Risking your feelings to help save a life is a risk worth taking.

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