

A suicidal person may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted. Most people who commit suicide don't want to die—they just want to stop hurting. Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously. If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. But talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life

Suicide Warning Signs

Talking about suicide	Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm, such as "I wish I hadn't been born," "If I see you again...", and "I'd be better off dead."
Seeking out lethal means	Seeking access to guns, pills, knives, or other objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
Preoccupation with death	Unusual focus on death, dying, or violence. Writing poems or stories about death.
No hope for the future	Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped ("There's no way out"). Belief that things will never get better or change.
Self-loathing, self-hatred	Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Feeling like a burden ("Everyone would be better off without me").
Getting affairs in order	Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.
Saying goodbye	Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again.
Withdrawing from others	Withdrawing from friends and family. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.
Self-destructive behavior	Increased alcohol or drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sex. Taking unnecessary risks as if they have a "death wish."
Sudden sense of calm	A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to commit suicide.

Suicide prevention tip #1: Speak up if you're worried

If you spot the warning signs of suicide in someone you care about, you may wonder if it's a good idea to say anything. What if you're wrong? What if the person gets angry? In such situations, it's natural to feel uncomfortable or afraid. But anyone who talks about suicide or shows other warning signs needs immediate help—the sooner the better.

When talking to a suicidal person

Do:

- Be yourself. Let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone. The right words are often unimportant. If you are concerned, your voice and manner will show it.
- Listen. Let the suicidal person unload despair, ventilate anger. No matter how negative the conversation seems, the fact that it exists is a positive sign.
- Be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting. Your friend or family member is doing the right thing by talking about his/her feelings.
- Offer hope. Reassure the person that help is available and that the suicidal feelings are temporary. Let the person know that his or her life is important to you.
- If the person says things like, "I'm so depressed, I can't go on," ask the question: "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" You are not putting ideas in their head, you are showing that you are concerned, that you take them seriously, and that it's OK for them to share their pain with you.

But don't:

- Argue with the suicidal person. Avoid saying things like: "You have so much to live for," "Your suicide will hurt your family," or "Look on the bright side."
- Act shocked, lecture on the value of life, or say that suicide is wrong.
- Promise confidentiality. Refuse to be sworn to secrecy. A life is at stake and you may need to speak to a mental health professional in order to keep the suicidal person safe. If you promise to keep your discussions secret, you may have to break your word.
- Offer ways to fix their problems, or give advice, or make them feel like they have to justify their suicidal feelings. It is not about how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting your friend or loved one.
- Blame yourself. You can't "fix" someone's depression. Your loved one's happiness, or lack thereof, is not your responsibility.

Adapted from: *Metanoia.org*

Suicide prevention tip #2: Respond quickly in a crisis

If a friend or family member tells you that he or she is thinking about death or suicide, it's important to evaluate the immediate danger the person is in. Those at the highest risk for committing suicide in the near future have a specific suicide PLAN, the MEANS to carry out the plan, a TIME SET for doing it, and an INTENTION to do it.

If a suicide attempt seems imminent, call a local crisis center, dial 911, or take the person to an emergency room. Remove guns, drugs, knives, and other potentially lethal objects from the vicinity but **do not, under any circumstances, leave a suicidal person alone.**

Suicide prevention tip #3: Offer help and support

If a friend or family member is suicidal, the best way to help is by offering an empathetic, listening ear. Let your loved one know that he or she is not alone and that you care. Don't take responsibility, however, for making your loved one well. You can offer support, but you can't get better for a suicidal person. He or she has to make a personal commitment to recovery.

It takes a lot of courage to help someone who is suicidal. Witnessing a loved one dealing with thoughts about ending his or her own life can stir up many difficult emotions. As you're helping a suicidal person, don't forget to take care of yourself. Find someone that you trust—a friend, family member, clergyman, or counselor—to talk to about your feelings and get support of your own.

Helping a suicidal person:

- **Get professional help.** Do everything in your power to get a suicidal person the help he or she needs. Call a crisis line for advice and referrals. Encourage the person to see a mental health professional, help locate a treatment facility, or take them to a doctor's appointment.
- **Follow-up on treatment.** If the doctor prescribes medication, make sure your friend or loved one takes it as directed. Be aware of possible side effects and be sure to notify the physician if the person seems to be getting worse. It often takes time and persistence to find the medication or therapy that's right for a particular person.
- **Be proactive.** Those contemplating suicide often don't believe they can be helped, so you may have to be more proactive at offering assistance. Saying, "Call me if you need anything" is too vague. Don't wait for the person to call you or even to return your calls. Drop by, call again, invite the person out.
- **Encourage positive lifestyle changes,** such as a healthy diet, plenty of sleep, and getting out in the sun or into nature for at least 30 minutes each day. Exercise is also extremely important as it releases endorphins, relieves stress, and promotes emotional well-being.
- **Make a safety plan.** Help the person develop a set of steps he or she promises to follow during a suicidal crisis. It should identify any triggers that may lead to a suicidal crisis, such as an anniversary of a loss, alcohol, or stress from relationships. Also include contact numbers for the person's doctor or therapist, as well as friends and family members who will help in an emergency.
- **Remove potential means of suicide,** such as pills, knives, razors, or firearms. If the person is likely to take an overdose, keep medications locked away or give out only as the person needs them.

- **Continue your support over the long haul.** Even after the immediate suicidal crisis has passed, stay in touch with the person, periodically checking in or dropping by. Your support is vital to ensure your friend or loved one remains on the recovery track.

Community Services

Hannahville Behavioral Health provides comprehensive counseling and crisis management services for adults, adolescents and children. Our team of compassionate professionals includes a psychiatrist, mental health therapists and substance abuse counselors. Counseling is available by appointment Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4pm EST. Call 906-466-2878 to schedule an appointment.

If you or someone you love is experiencing crisis symptoms and it is after working hours, services can be obtained through community mental health by going to your local Emergency Room, calling 9-1-1, or accessing the suicide prevention hotline at 1-800-273- TALK

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/suicide_prevention.htm