

WHEN YOU THINK SOMEONE MIGHT BE SUICIDAL...

ASK

them directly



LISTEN

to their pain



HELP

them to get help
or
get help for them

(Details inside.)

THE FACTS

Suicide is not about wanting to die, it's about wanting to stop unbearable emotional pain and a sense of hopelessness. Almost every suicidal person will choose to live if they can find another way to release their pain and overcome their hopelessness.

Ignoring painful feelings will not make them go away. By finding someone to talk to, or listening to someone who needs to talk, you can release the pain and hopelessness.

Talking to a person about their suicidal thoughts and feelings will not make them try it. Talking to a person about suicide lets them know that you care about them. Not talking about suicide makes it impossible to prevent.

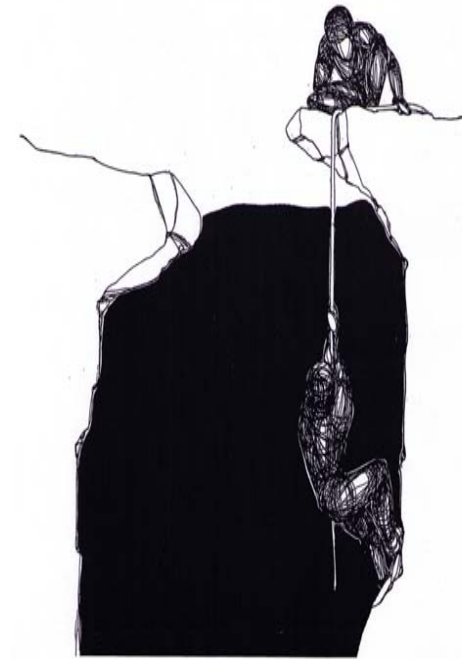
People who talk about suicide mean what they say. Most suicidal people warn those close to them. Listen to what they have to say.

A non-lethal attempt is serious. 80% of lethal suicides follow an earlier attempt. Always take an attempt seriously as a desperate cry for help.

Many of those who try to kill themselves were depressed at the time. Adult depression tends to slow a person down, childhood depression often speeds a person up, youth go both ways.

Alcohol and drugs contribute to suicide. Over 60% of Aboriginal people who suicided were intoxicated. A significant increase in drug/alcohol use often precedes a suicide attempt, as the regular "dosage" of self-medication fails to ease the pain.

HELPING A SUICIDAL PERSON



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SIGNALS OF SUICIDE

A suicidal person does not want to die, so they send out an 'S.O.S.' Signals of Suicide include:

Alterations: either a sudden change or an ongoing trend for the worse in how a person acts, thinks or feels often comes before a suicide attempt.

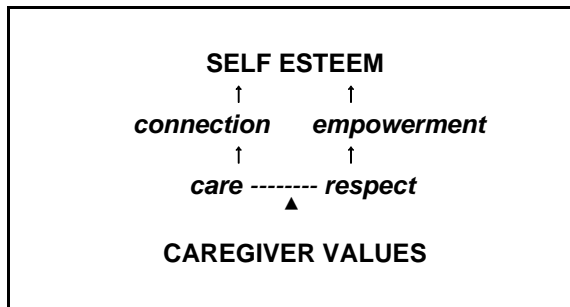
Alarms: references to suicide or being dead (e.g., jokes, comments, stories, pictures, or 'threats') that lets you know what's on their minds.

Attempts: a recent or just disclosed suicide attempt (any time a method and desire to die come together) or an act of self-harm.

Arrangements: actions you may expect from anyone who knows that they are going to die (e.g., unexpected 'good-byes', giving away prized possessions, writing wills, making amends, quitting work/school...).

THE HELPER'S ROLE

Self esteem is value that we have in ourselves; it protects us against suicide. Self esteem is based on two foundations –a sense of: (1) *connection* resulting from the sense that you are valued by those who are important to you, and (2) *empowerment*–the belief that you are in control of your life and that you are capable in the face of your life. The role of a helper is to assist a person in crisis as they re-build their self esteem.



There are two values at the root of this role: *care* and *respect*. *Care* is the desire you have for another person to be healthy, happy, and safe. *Care* offers *connection*. *Respect* is the belief that another person is separate from you-- that they have the right to make their own decisions and the capacity to respond to their problems. *Respect* offers a person in crisis the opportunity to build their *empowerment*.

As a helper, remember to care for yourself!

HOW TO HELP A SUICIDAL PERSON

Never keep a 'Signal of Suicide' secret or act alone when helping a suicidal person. "An angry friend is better than a dead one."

HELP: *them get help...*

to deal with their problems. Ensure that they commit to a "Safety Plan" (noted on the right). If they refuse, or you believe they will not follow through on the "Safety and Wellness Plan", then get help for them immediately!

LISTEN: *to them ...*

so they can release their pain and fight their hopeless self-talk. *Accept that their feelings and way of seeing things are true for them, even if they are different from your own.* After they have talked out their pain, they will be able to look at their situation and choices more clearly.

ASK: *if they are suicidal.*

Be direct. For example: "I'm worried about you and I want to know, have you been thinking about killing yourself?"

Suicide is a personal choice. You are responsible to offer the best help you can, you are not responsible for another person's feelings or for their choices.

SAFETY & WELLNESS PLAN

A *Safety Plan* is a commitment to living to be made by a person in crisis (with your help). They need to:

Keep Safe:

- (1) Remove planned suicide methods
- (2) Ensure they are safe ~
According to their suicide risk, the person in crisis will need to:
 - take care of themselves
 - go to their family/friends
 - go to hospital or be on 24 watch
- (3) Meet with clinician
- *to assess mental health/suicide risk*
- (4) Stay sober
- *if there is alcohol/drug use*

Pursue Wellness:

- Meet with a counsellor to:*
- (5) Talk out feelings
 - (6) Learn to fight suicide self-talk
 - (7) Spend time with family/friends
 - (8) Pursue positive activities:
- *reasons to live/soothing pastimes*

If a suicidal person refuses to commit to the *Safety Plan*, they need *you* to make it happen for them.