

## Helping Someone Dealing with Suicide

Helping a friend, partner or family member can be very meaningful and challenging at the same time. Someone you care about might come to you for support because they are struggling and feel like killing themselves. You might notice some concerning signs in a loved one (eg. sudden withdrawals, self-destructive behaviour, self-loathing) that you want to ask about. Here are some things you can say and do to take care of them and take care of yourself at the same time.

1. **Ask.** Do not avoid words like “suicide” and “killing yourself”, and do not ask questions with judgment. Being open about suicide can create a space for someone to talk about feelings and thoughts that might otherwise be subject to a lot of shame and stigma. If you suspect that someone might be at risk of suicide, ask them compassionately, gently, but directly.

- “I’ve noticed that you seem down lately. I was wondering if you were considering suicide?”
- “You said that the world feels dark. Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

2. **Listen, listen, listen.** Take comments about suicide seriously. It is a common myth that those who express suicidal thoughts are just seeking attention. Suicide can be an option for someone feeling intense feelings of depression, anger, anxiety, guilt, self-blame, pain and/or more. Take some time to hear them out. Remind the person that you care about them, validate their feelings, and do not make personal judgments. The opportunity to talk openly about reasons for wanting to die can help immensely and give someone great relief.

3. **Assess.** While still taking the time to remain compassionate and validate their feelings, you can ask simple questions to find out how imminent the risk of suicide is.

- “Have you thought about how you would do it?”
- “Have you thought about when you would do it?”
- “Have you tried to kill yourself before?”


Gaining information helps you adjust the way you support them. Based on information you get, you can create a plan together to keep the person safe. For example, you might suggest staying with them for a while. You can mutually agree to remove their specific means of suicide or commit to calling a number in the case of a future crisis.

- “How would you feel about working together on a plan to keep you safe tonight?”
- “Who do you feel like you could call if feelings of suicide come up really strongly again?”
- “You said the pills help to numb the pain, are you able to take them in a safe way?”

Here is [a more detailed explanation](#) about safety planning.

4. **Seek support, not secrecy.** They might ask you to keep their story a secret. This is understandable, but it is not a good idea to keep everything to yourself. It can be very hard to be alone in carrying the burden of caring for someone else. It is always a good idea to bring in more people and services into someone’s support network.

5. **Take care of yourself.** If you are new to talking about suicide, you might find yourself reacting strongly or having intense feelings. It is important to take care of your own needs so that you can best support someone else. For tips on taking care of yourself while supporting someone, here is [a useful guide](#).



Thank you  
for being  
there.

Your friends @ Youthspace