

HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE THINKING OF SUICIDE

Helping someone in your life thinking of suicide can be very meaningful and hard at the same time. If someone you care about comes to you for support because they are struggling and feel like killing themselves, here are some things you can say and do to take care of them and take care of yourself at the same time.

1 What is telling you to worry?

Before you ask someone if they are thinking of ending their life, you might want to consider what it is about them that is making you feel like they're contemplating death. Are there major changes in their behavior, feelings, body cues, or self talk that are making you worry?

2 Ask directly about suicide

Without avoiding the word "suicide", ask if they are thinking about killing themselves. 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. For example:

- *"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?"*

3 Listen without judgement

It is a common myth that those who express suicidal thoughts are seeking attention. Suicide feel like an option for someone feeling intense emotions, so 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.

You can ask simple questions to find out how imminent the risk of suicide is.

- *"Have you thought about how or when you would do it?"*
- *"Have you tried to kill yourself before?"*

4 Keep them and yourself safe

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, or you can mutually agree to remove their specific means of suicide or commit to calling a crisis number in the future.

- *"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?"*

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.

It is important to take care of your own needs so that you can best support someone else!