

Suicide Intervention Strategies That May Save a Life

After determining that the person is possibly considering suicide as evidenced by the presence of potential indicators, it is critical you take the following actions. You may save a life.

1. Ask the person, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" It is a myth that you will plant the idea in someone's head. If a person has been thinking of suicide, he/she will be relieved and grateful that you were willing to be so open and nonjudgmental. It shows a person you truly care and take him/her seriously. Stay calm, but always take thoughts of or plans for suicide seriously.
2. If you get a "yes" to your question ask, "Do you have a plan?" If "yes", you will want to know their plan and if the means/method is available and accessible. Ask "Do you have access to your method?" (examples: gun, rope, medication, carbon monoxide). Next you should ask "When will you do it?" (today, next week?) Asking this question will give you an idea if the person is in immediate danger. If you feel he/she is, do not leave the person alone! A suicidal person must see a doctor or psychiatrist immediately. You may have to take him/her to the nearest hospital emergency room or call 9-1-1.
3. Never keep a plan for suicide a secret. Don't worry about breaking a bond of friendship at this point. Friendships can be fixed. And never call a person's bluff, or try to minimize his problems by telling him he has everything to live for or how hurt his family would be. This will only increase his guilt and feelings of hopelessness. He needs to be reassured that there is help that what he is feeling is treatable, and that his suicidal feelings are temporary.
4. If you feel the person isn't in immediate danger, you can say things like, "I understand that you are in pain, and that you want the pain to stop", and "I care about you and will do my best to help you." Then follow through - help him/her find a doctor or a mental health professional. Be by her side when he/she makes that first phone call, or go along on the first appointment. It's not a good idea to leave it up to a person to get help on his/her own. A supportive person can mean so much to someone who's in pain.

If you, or someone you love, are in emotional crisis and are in King County, Washington, please call our [24-Hour Crisis Line](#) at 206.461.3222, toll free at 866.4CRISIS or via our TDD line at 206.461.3219.

Outside of King County, please call 9-1-1 and ask to be connected to your local crisis help line or call 1.800.SUICIDE.