

How You Can Help a Suicidal Person

College is a huge adjustment for most people regardless of their age or background. For some, this transition is more stressful than for others. If you have noticed changes in someone you know that concern you, you can help. You may be aware of troubling signs that something is wrong with a friend that relatives, professors and others may not detect.

Some warning signs demand immediate action:

- Declaring a plan to hurt or kill him or herself
- Talking, writing, or drawing about suicide, death or violence
- Saying things like: "I wish I were dead", "I'm going to end it all", "What's the point of living?", "Soon you won't have to worry about me", "Who cares if I'm dead?"
- Staying alone rather than seeking the company of friends or relatives
- Sudden mood swings, depression, or saying that life is meaningless
- Giving away prized possessions
- Talking about reuniting with a deceased loved one
- Neglecting appearance or hygiene
- Obtaining a weapon or another means of hurting him or herself (such as prescription medication).
- Suddenly neglecting school assignments or frequently cutting class
- A fascination with violence, weapons, or violent movies and video games
- Risk-taking such as reckless driving, carelessness around balconies or in traffic, or having "accidents" that result in injury

Certain people are at higher risk for suicide, such as those individuals:

- with alcohol or substance abuse problems
- who are depressed
- involved in abusive relationships and/or with a history of physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- struggling with sexual orientation or gender identity issues
- with eating disorders
- who have a family member with a history of depression or suicide

How Can You Help?

If you think that any of your friends or classmates might be thinking about hurting themselves, there are two important things you can do:

Talk to them. Ask them if they are thinking about hurting themselves. You may have to be persistent before they are willing to talk. Listen non-judgmentally and don't pretend you have

the answers. Talking about suicide will NOT push someone to kill themselves. Express your concern for the person. Suicidal people often feel as though no one understands them or that they aren't taken seriously. Talking through feelings may help a friend recognize the need for professional help.

Always take any intention, feelings or suicidal behaviors very seriously: It is also not true that people who talk about killing themselves will not actually try it. You should be especially concerned if people tell you that they have made a detailed suicide plan or know of a way to hurt themselves. Don't leave them alone. The most important thing you can do may be to help them find help. NEVER promise to keep someone's intention to kill him or herself a secret. Develop a plan for help with the person.

Express your concern to a responsible adult. Find someone who is concerned with and understands young people and can help such as a teacher, counselor, coach, a member of your friend's family, or a religious leader. If you think your friend is in danger, but they refuse to get help, or, if you don't feel that you know the person well enough, you should speak to an adult that can intervene.

Don't be afraid of being wrong. It is difficult even for experts to understand who is at serious risk of suicide and who is not. Surprisingly, the risk for suicide can sometimes increase as a person begins to recover from depression, and people considering suicide might actually seem calmer or happier. Many of the warning signs for suicide could also indicate problems with drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, depression, or another mental illness. People with these problems need help, too.

If you are thinking of hurting yourself, immediately tell someone who can help. If you cannot talk to your parents, find someone else: a relative, a friend, or someone in personal counseling.

Resources for More Help

If the danger is immediate, always call 911.

Call any of the 24/7 hotlines: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-TALK (8255)

Samaritans of NY - 212-673-3000

24-hour hotline- 212-532-2400

1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-621-HOPE (24-hour)

Go Ask Alice! <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu>

Ulifeline.org <http://www.ulifeline.org>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center <http://www.sprc.org>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Kings County Hospital Emergency Room - 451 Clarkson Avenue, Brooklyn, 718-245-5209

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