

# Suicide Prevention



A suicidal person may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted. People who take their lives don't want to die—they just want to stop hurting. Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously. If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. But talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life.

## QUESTION

If you believe someone is considering suicide, ask them directly "Are you thinking about suicide or wanting to kill yourself?" Don't say "Do you want to hurt yourself?" as self-harm can be non-lethal and it's not the same as wanting to die. Also remember that if you ask someone if they want to kill themselves, this does NOT drive them toward that action. That's a myth that's not accurate. Don't be afraid to ask the question.

## PERSUADE

Take any suicidal talk or behavior seriously. It's not just a warning sign that the person is thinking about suicide—it's a cry for help. Persuade the person to allow you to assist them in getting help right now. Say "Will you go with me to get help?" or "Will you let me assist you to get help?" Another option can be to enlist their promise not to kill themselves until you've arranged help for them. If persuasion doesn't work, call a local mental health center, crisis hotline or emergency services.

## REFER

Refer the person to an appropriate resource for assistance. It's ideal if you can personally escort them to see a health-care professional. Next best would be to assist in making arrangements for help and getting their agreement to follow through on this plan. Less preferable is to provide referral resources and have them seek one of the options on their own.

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**LIFELINE™**  
**1-800-273-TALK**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)