



Creating Safe & Secure Spaces to Minimize Suicide Risk

Creating safe and secure spaces for individuals at risk of suicide is a critical aspect of prevention that involves both physical and emotional environments to foster safety, open communication and trust. The following guidance can help you create such spaces, especially for someone returning home after a hospitalization for a suicide attempt.

Managing Post-Hospitalization Care

For a person who has attempted suicide, the transition from hospital to home can be a vulnerable time, and the primary goal should be to ensure they feel safe and supported. Among the steps you can take to ease their transition are:

Open Communication: Encourage open and honest dialogue. Let them know they can talk about their feelings without judgment. Express your willingness to listen and be there for them.

Follow-Up Care: Ensure they continue with their prescribed therapy and medication. Regularly check in on their progress and encourage adherence to their treatment plan.

Educate Yourself: Learn about suicide prevention, signs of distress and how to provide support. This knowledge will help you respond appropriately in various situations.

Creating a Space for Conversation

Creating a space where the individual feels comfortable talking about their feelings is essential. This includes:

Non-Judgmental Listening: When they talk, listen without interrupting or judging. Validate their feelings and show empathy.

Avoiding Triggers: Identify and avoid topics or situations that might trigger distress. Be mindful of the conversations you have and the media you consume together.

Encouraging Expression: Encourage them to express their emotions through various means, such as talking, writing or engaging in creative activities. Sometimes expressing feelings through art, music, or journaling can be therapeutic.

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After hospitalization, create a safe space for conversation by listening without judgment, avoiding triggers and encouraging expression of feelings through talking, journaling or creative outlets.

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Securing Risky Objects

Securing objects that could potentially be used in a suicide attempt is a critical preventative measure, including:

Medication: Keep all prescription and over-the-counter medications locked away. If they are prescribed medication, ensure it is dispensed in a controlled manner to prevent overdose.

Weapons: If there are firearms in the house, they should be stored unloaded and locked away, with ammunition stored separately. Consider removing firearms from the home entirely if possible.

Sharp Objects: Secure or remove sharp objects such as knives, razors and scissors. Keep them in a locked cabinet or drawer.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Environment

An emotionally safe environment is one where the individual feels valued, respected and supported. You can provide such an environment by offering:

Consistent Support: Regularly check in with them, ask how they're feeling and show concern for their well-being.

Positive Reinforcement: Encourage and praise their positive efforts and achievements, no matter how small. Positive reinforcement can boost self-esteem and motivation. Avoid negative, hostile or critical talk as much as possible.

Routine: Help them establish a daily routine that includes physical activity, hobbies, social interaction and relaxation. A structured routine can provide a sense of stability and purpose.

Promoting Professional Help

Professional help is necessary in fighting thoughts of suicide, providing services that can meet each person's needs. Encourage someone who is struggling with suicide ideation to seek professional help resources such as:

Individual Talk Therapy: Encourage them to attend therapy sessions and be supportive of their treatment plan. Therapy can provide them with coping strategies and a safe space to explore their emotions.

Support Groups: Suggest joining support groups where they can meet others who are experiencing similar struggles. These gatherings can provide a sense of community and understanding.

Crisis Resources: Ensure they have access to crisis resources such as hotlines and emergency contact numbers. Knowing where to turn in a crisis can be lifesaving.

#StopSuicide

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 9-8-8 or 800-273-8255.

