



Helping a Loved One Who Is Suicidal

Before you read: This content talks about suicide prevention. Some linked sources may include sensitive topics. Our goal is to raise awareness, promote prevention and care for readers' well-being.

If a friend or family member shows signs of suicidal thoughts, how you respond matters. Talking with care, respect and without judgment can help protect their life. One of many evidence-based methods is QPR: question, persuade, refer.

Question: Start the conversation with empathy. Speak in a calm, caring and specific way when it comes to what you have seen about their behavior. You might say, "I've noticed you have seemed more down and withdrawn over the last few weeks," or "I've noticed that you haven't seemed like yourself. You used to return my calls quickly and now I haven't heard from you in a few weeks. Are you okay?" This shows concern and helps them feel safe to talk.

Persuade: If a person admits to suicidal thoughts, offer hope to stay alive and seek help. Allow them to keep speaking and validate their feelings while offering an alternative to suicide. You might say, "Will you go with me to get help?"

Refer: Finally, refer the person to professional resources. The 988 Lifeline may help connect callers to trained crisis counselors who provide assessment and referral to appropriate services. Resources may include an emergency room at a hospital or a mental health professional that can schedule with the person as soon as possible. If the individual refuses help and you believe they are in danger, call 911 and ask for an ambulance. If you are a child or teen, tell a trusted adult. This could be a parent, teacher, school counselor, doctor, faith leader or family friend. Even if your friend asks you not to tell anyone, getting help is the right choice.

Keep in Mind

Many people who think about suicide do reach out. They often talk first with friends or family, not a mental health professional. Always take their words seriously. If you sense danger, act right away. This is a life-or-death situation.

Do not leave the person alone. If there is concern about imminent danger, staying with the person is important. Your presence can bridge the gap until professional help is accessed. If there is a medical emergency, call 911.

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Help reduce access to lethal means. If you are aware of any risky objects or medication in the home, do your best to secure them or keep the person away until they can get help.

If you are unsure, still act. If you are not sure they are safe or you cannot make a clear safety plan, take them to a hospital right away. If they refuse help and you believe they are in danger, call 911 and ask for an ambulance.

What Not to Say

Avoid these responses. They can cause harm:

“Your life isn’t that bad.” Their pain is real.

“You don’t really want to die.” Take their words seriously.

“You have so much to live for.” They may not feel that way right now.

“Everyone has problems.” This can make them feel more alone.

Why This Matters

Listening with care and helping someone reach support can save a life. Your actions may be the first step toward hope and healing. Do not try to handle it alone or leave the person without a safety plan: identify who they can call, where they can go, and what coping strategies they can consider.

#StopSuicide

If someone is in crisis, encourage them to call the **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** at 988 or 800-273-8255. Help is free, private and available all day, every day.

Reviewed by Clinical Consultant, LMHC.

Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger or a life-threatening emergency requiring immediate physical intervention. If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally, feeling overwhelmed, anxious, hopeless, in crisis, or simply needs someone to talk to, call or text 988 for free, confidential support 24/7. The 988 Lifeline is available to anyone in the United States or U.S. territories. People do not have to be suicidal or in immediate danger to call or text 988. There is also a chat feature available on 988lifeline.org. Lucet members can contact us to connect with free resources and find care.

