



How to Talk to Someone Who Is Having Suicidal Thoughts

1. Start the Conversation

- Visit [SuicidelsPreventable.org](https://www.suicidelspreventable.org)
 - Before starting a conversation with someone you are concerned about, be prepared. Have a list of crisis resources on hand. Practice what you will say. Plan the conversation for a time when you won't be in a hurry and can spend time with the person.
- "I've noticed that you've mentioned feeling hopeless a lot lately..."
 - Mention the signs that prompted you to ask about suicide. This makes it clear that you are not asking "out of the blue," and makes it more difficult for the person to deny that something is bothering them.
- "Sometimes when people feel like that, they are thinking about suicide. Are you thinking about suicide?"
 - Ask directly about suicide. Talking about suicide does NOT put the idea in someone's head and usually they are relieved. Asking directly and using the word "suicide" establishes that you and the person at risk are talking about the same thing and lets the person know that you are willing to talk about suicide.
- "Are you thinking about ending your life?"
 - You may phrase the question in a different way. If they answer "yes" to your direct question about suicide stay calm, and don't leave the person alone until further help is obtained. Call 9-1-1 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

2. Listen, Express Concern, Reassure

- "I can imagine how tough this must be for you. I understand when you say that you aren't sure if you want to live or die. But have you always wanted to die? Well, maybe there's a chance you won't feel this way forever. I can help"
 - Listen to the reasons the person has for both living and dying. Validate that they are considering both options and underscore that living is an option for them.
- "I'm deeply concerned about you and I want you to know that help is available to get you through this."
 - Let the person know you care. Letting them know that you take their situation seriously, and you are genuinely concerned about them, will go a long way in your effort to support them.

3. Create a Safety Plan

- "Do you have any weapons or prescription medications in the house?"
 - Ask the person if they have access to any lethal means (weapons, medications, etc) and help remove them from the vicinity. (Another friend, family member or law enforcement agent may be needed to assist with this.)
 - Do not put yourself in danger; if you are concerned about your own safety, call 911.
- "Is there someone you can call if you think you may act on your thoughts of suicide?"



- Create a safety plan together. Ask the person what will help keep them safe until they meet with a professional
- "Will you promise me that you will not drink or at least have someone monitor your drinking until we can get you help?"
 - Ask the person if they will refrain from using alcohol and other drugs or agree to have someone monitor their use.
- "Please promise me that you will not harm yourself or act on any thoughts of suicide until you meet with a professional."
 - Get a verbal commitment that the person will not act upon thoughts of suicide until they have met with a professional.

4. Get Help

- "I understand if it feels awkward to go see a counselor. But there is a phone number we can call to talk to somebody. Maybe they can help?"
 - Provide the person with the resources you have come prepared with. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline anytime at 1-800-273-8255.
 - If you feel the situation is critical, take the person to a nearby Emergency Room or walk-in psychiatric crisis clinic or call 9-1-1.

5. What Not to Say

- "You're not thinking about suicide, are you?"
OR, "You're not thinking about doing something stupid, are you?"
 - Don't ask in a way that indicates you want "No" for an answer.
- "Fine! If you want to be selfish and kill yourself then go right ahead! See if I care."
 - Don't tell the person to do it. You may want to shout in frustration or anger, but this is the most dangerous thing you can say.
- Don't Say: "Don't worry, I won't tell anyone. Your secret is safe with me."
 - Don't promise secrecy. The person may say that they don't want you to tell anyone that they are suicidal.
 - Say this instead: "I care about you too much to keep a secret like this. You need help and I am here to help you get it."
 - You may be concerned that they will be upset with you, but when someone's life is at risk, it is more important to ensure their safety.