



# What Do I Say?

Talking to someone about suicide can feel awkward and uncomfortable. But, if you have concerns, breaking through your own discomfort could save a life. Showing your that you care and directly asking about thoughts of suicide can be vital first steps in helping someone get the support they need.

- + **Be sensitive to the need for privacy.** Approach and talk in a private setting.
- + **Be yourself.** Use honest and non-judgmental language to start a conversation. Tell the person what you've noticed. Use words that you feel comfortable with and that make sense given the situation and your relationship.
- + **Be direct.** Ask if they're having suicidal thoughts. Give them a chance to talk. Let them know you're listening. Remember that it's not your job to "fix" this. You don't need to act as a counselor or give advice.
- + **Show your concern and support.** Acknowledge the despair they're feeling. Don't try to minimize their pain. Let the person know you care and that they are valued. Be kind, even if you feel angry about what they're considering.
- + **Be aware that you may have to break confidentiality.** Try to avoid promising to keep what they tell you to yourself, but do promise if it's the key to being allowed to help. You may need to break that promise to keep the person safe.
- + **Help them connect with professional help,** even if they resist. A person who has reached a point where suicide is an option often doesn't believe they can be helped.

## Starting a conversation

- + *I feel like you haven't been yourself lately. I am concerned about you. Can we talk?*
- + *I want to respect your privacy, but I'm worried about you.*
- + *I know you've been having a tough time recently. Can you share what has been going on?*
- + *I really care about you, and I can tell something's wrong. Can you tell me how I can help?*

## Phrases you could use

- + *How long have you felt like this?*
- + *Have you been feeling hopeless?*
- + *How are you coping with what's been going on in your life?*
- + *You are not alone with this. I'm here for you.*
- + *I may not know exactly how you feel, but you matter to me and I want to help.*
- + *I know it doesn't seem like it now, but you won't always feel like this. Things can change.*
- + *Can you think of anything I could do to help you?*
- + *Have you thought about getting help?*
- + *I think you need help; I want to call someone to help us.*

## Key questions to ask:

- + *Do you ever find yourself thinking that you would hurt yourself?*
- + *What are your thoughts like?*

## Phrases that may not be helpful

- + *You don't really want to do that.*
- + *It can't be that bad.*
- + *You have so much to live for.*
- + *You can't do that to your family.*

What to do

If you become aware that someone is prepared to act on their suicidal thoughts, you should take immediate action. Your goal is to keep the individual safe and make a connection to others who can help. Use the SOS reminder:

|   |                |   |
|---|----------------|---|
| S | Stay with them | Do not leave them alone, even for a brief time (provided this doesn't put you in danger).   |
| O | Obtain help    | <p>Think of this as a medical emergency. You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Call 911</li><li>+ Call or text 988 to reach the <b>988 Suicide &amp; Crisis Lifeline</b></li><li>+ At work, alert a manager, Security, or other appropriate person.</li><li>+ If it is a friend or relative, options might include calling their doctor or taking them to an Emergency Room (if the person can be transported safely).</li></ul> |
| S | Safety first   | <p>As much as you want to keep the individual safe, never put yourself or others in danger. If it's possible to do so safely, try to remove any item that could be used for self-harm. Use a calm voice and manner to keep the situation as controlled as possible.</p>   |



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