

HOW TO BEGIN THE CONVERSATION ABOUT SUICIDE

Before talking with someone you are concerned about, have suicide crisis resources available, such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number, 1-800-273-8255 (TALK), or numbers and addresses of local crisis lines or treatment centers.

Mention what signs prompted you to ask about how they are feeling. Mention the warning signs that prompted you to ask the person about how they are feeling, the words used, or behavior displayed (signs make it more difficult to deny that something is wrong).

Ask the Question. Ask directly about suicide. Ask the question in such a way that is natural and flows over the course of the conversation. Ask the question in a way that gives you a "yes" or "no" answer. Don't wait to ask the question when the person is halfway out the door. Asking directly and using the word "suicide" establishes that you and the at-risk person are talking about the same thing, and lets them know you are not afraid to talk about it.

Ask: "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

or

"Are you thinking about ending your life?"

How NOT to Ask the Question "You're not thinking about killing yourself, are you?"

Do not ask the question as though you are looking for a "no" answer. Asking the question in this manner tells the person that although you assume they are suicidal, you want and will accept a denial.

VALIDATE THE PERSON' EXPERIENCE:

Talk openly. Don't panic. Be willing to listen and allow emotional expression. Recognize that the situation is serious. Don't pass judgment. Reassure that help is available. Don't promise secrecy. Don't leave the person alone.

Get HelpShare available resources with the person.

Be willing to make the call, or take part in the call to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (Talk). The toll-free confidential Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Let the person know that you are willing to go with them to see a professional when they are ready.

If you feel the situation is critical, take the person to the closest Emergency Room or call 9-1-1.

Do not put yourself in danger; if at any time during the process you are concerned about your own safety, or that the person may harm others, call 9-1-1. Never negotiate with a person who has a gun, call 9-1-1 and leave the area. If the person has done harm to him or herself in any way, call 9-1-1.