

# Help a loved one find hope

## Suicide awareness and support



Suicide doesn't discriminate. It can affect people from any walk of life — no matter their race, age, gender, or income. But there are real, effective ways to help prevent it, and we all have a role to play. That's why it's vital to know the warning signs and what you can do to help someone in need. It might help you save a life.

### Know the warning signs

If you think a loved one may be at risk for suicide, look for changes in the way they speak and act. Some warning signs include:<sup>1</sup>

- Acting in ways that are unusual or worrisome.
- Differences in exercise habits, eating, or sleep.
- Giving away belongings or saying goodbye.
- Increased alcohol or drug use.
- Prolonged mood changes, such as persistent anxiety, sadness, or anger.
- Talk of feeling hopeless, trapped, or in pain.
- Talk about death or suicide.
- Withdrawing from family and friends.

### Take the threat of suicide seriously

If you are concerned about someone close to you, these are six actions you can take:<sup>2</sup>



Reach out

Ask direct questions, such as: "Are you thinking about suicide?" or "Have you tried to harm yourself?" This won't make things worse — allowing someone that's hurting to open up in a safe space may actually reduce suicidal thoughts.



Listen

Allow the person to talk openly through what they're thinking and feeling, and take their answers seriously. Let them know you care.



Build connections

Help them create a network of people to talk to when they're struggling. Start by encouraging them to see their regular doctor and a therapist right away.



Keep them safe

Do what you can to reduce access to means of self-harm, such as guns, prescription medicines, razors, or knives. Encourage them to call, text, or chat the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988 or 988lifeline.org) if they're dealing with suicidal thoughts — it's free, confidential, and available 24/7. Save the number as an emergency contact in their phone.



Know when to get more help

If someone you know has made a suicide attempt or says they have plans to do so, seek help right away. Don't leave the person alone — call 911 or take them to an emergency room.

You can also call, text, or chat the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline to talk with a crisis counselor. They can offer support and connect you with local resources.



Follow up

Staying in touch after a crisis makes a difference. Keep reaching out, even after you think they may be feeling better.

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Mental Health: *Suicide Prevention* (accessed July 2023); [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov).

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Mental Health: *5 Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain* (accessed July 2023); [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov).

Online counseling is not appropriate for all kinds of problems. If you are in crisis or have suicidal thoughts, it's important that you seek help immediately. Please call 988 (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) and ask for help. If your issue is an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.