

How to Spot a Possible Suicide

If someone you know talks about suicide, take them seriously. Comments like “They’re better off without me,” “I won’t have to worry about my life much longer,” or “I wish I were dead” are warning signs of desperation. Also, watch for these suicidal signs and gestures.

- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and helplessness.
- Standing on the edge of a bridge, cutting the wrists with a dull instrument, driving recklessly on purpose.
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions.
- Spending time alone or not associating with others.
- Giving away personal possessions; getting legal matters in order.

Suicide prevention “don’ts” include:

- Don’t ignore a threat of suicide.
- Don’t keep someone’s threat of suicide a secret.
- Don’t dare or challenge someone who has threatened to commit suicide.
- Don’t leave a person alone if they talk about suicide.

What to do instead.

- Ask how the person plans to carry out the suicide. Has he or she acquired a gun or pills?
- Waste no time in finding help. Contact friends, family members, a family doctor, a member of the clergy, a crisis intervention center, and/or a suicide prevention hotline.
- Let the person know you care. Reassure the person that treatments are available to help him or her work through problems, no matter how hopeless they seem.
- Encourage the individual to continue to work or participate in hobbies, sports, or other activities.
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