

HOW TO TALK TO: ABOUT SUICIDE YOUR FRIEND

Let's talk

If you think your friend is feeling suicidal, the first step is to talk to them about it. It's natural to feel daunted by the situation, but there are things you can do to get them the help they need.

Talking to your friend about suicide

Do you reach out to your friends when you're going through a hard time?

If you do – great! If you don't, you're not alone.

Many young people don't seek help when they need it, and so it helps that friends speak up when they see someone struggling.

It can help to start by asking your friend how they feel.

It is okay to directly ask your friend if they are feeling suicidal. "Are you so low you're thinking about suicide?" may seem hard to say but can be the first step towards the help they need. If you still feel unsure, it may be easier for you to raise the subject by describing what you have observed, for example, "I noticed you didn't want to come out for our friend's birthday, is everything okay?"

Let them know you are concerned and that you care, but try not to overwhelm them. Listen and show you understand they are going through a hard time and that you are there for them.

It is important not to dismiss their feelings. Instead, simply acknowledge how they feel to avoid appearing judgemental.

Sometimes, when young people go through a hard time, they will decline opportunities to spend time with you. Sometimes, when they do spend time with you, they will not engage in conversation or seem like they are having much fun. While it may be easier to stop inviting them to spend time with you, it can help to continue to do so, as a sign that you still value them.

If talking about this with your friend is difficult, you can admit it. Sharing this discomfort may bring you closer, as it is probably just as difficult for them to share their feelings with you.

Whether your friend wants to talk about how they are feeling or not, help them by letting them know what support is available (see below). This is important as you should never

Common warning signs

- Becoming socially withdrawn (e.g. staying home for long periods of time or avoiding contact with family and friends)
- Behaving recklessly (e.g. driving recklessly) and taking unnecessary or uncharacteristic risks
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having nothing to live for
- Researching suicide methods
- Self-harming
- Abusing drugs and alcohol or using more than usual
- Becoming disconnected from family and friends
- Making direct suicide threats (e.g. "I want to die")
- Making indirect suicide threats (e.g. "I don't want to be here anymore")
- Displaying feelings of low self-worth
- Suddenly quitting important activities (e.g. extracurricular activities)
- Mood swings and irritability
- Writing suicide notes
- Putting affairs in order (young adults)

shoulder the responsibility of dealing with this on your own.

There are also support services for yourself, as supporting a friend who is feeling suicidal may take its toll, and your mental health is just as important.

Seeking help

One of the best things you can do is speak to a trusted adult – such as a parent or school counsellor, or GP.

Crisis support hotlines such as Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) and Lifeline (13 11 14) are available 24/7, 365 days a year. They provide immediate, free of charge, non-judgemental support. In an emergency, call triple zero (000).

Longer terms options include Headspace and Youth Insearch. Participation in Youth Insearch usually occurs over 9-12 months. For more information head to www.youthinsearch.org.au or call us at 02 9659 6122.



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