

# What if somebody threatens to commit SUICIDE?

When somebody threatens to commit suicide, give warning signs or say or do things that indicate that they are considering suicide, it can be very upsetting and you might not know what to say or do to help them. You might wonder whether your intervention will help or whether you might make the situation worse for the person, but knowing what questions to ask and which direction to steer them in, is already the helping hand that might just be what the other person needs to help them through another day or week. Taking action is always the better option. **Never take the threat to commit suicide lightly.** It is a desperate cry of pain and a loud cry out for help. Sometimes it is a cry for attention and the need to want to be seen, to be noticed, to be heard and to be validated as a human-being.

Remember that you are not responsible for preventing the person from committing suicide, but your intervention might help this person from noticing that there are other alternatives and options available to stay safe and get treatment.

**NEVER** be sworn to secrecy about their suicidal thoughts or plans. Don't leave the person alone and seek professional help immediately – the sooner the better.

Take care of yourself. By supporting somebody that is suicidal is emotionally demanding and it is important for you to find somebody to talk things over with, who can support you and give you guidance, like a mental health professional, family or friend.

## Common Warning Signs:

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| Talking or writing about suicide      | Getting the means to commit suicide (pills/gun/knives/rope)       |
| Withdrawing from social contact       | Having mood swings  |
| Being preoccupied with death or dying | Expressing feelings of hopelessness and “unbearable” feelings     |
| Increasing intake of alcohol or drugs | Changes in normal routine (more sleep or change in eating habits) |
| Saying goodbye/farewell to people     | Giving away belongings (getting affairs in order)                 |
| Developing personality changes        | Partaking in risky or self-destructive activities                 |

## What you can ASK and SAY to help a Suicidal friend or family member:

- I have been feeling concerned about you lately
- Are you thinking about hurting yourself?
- Do you have access to weapons or things that can be used as weapons to harm yourself?
- How can I best support you right now?
- Have you thought about getting help?
- How are you coping with what's been happening in your life?
- You have been acting really down lately?
- Are you thinking about suicide?
- Have you ever thought about suicide or tried to harm yourself before?
- You are not alone in this, I am here for you
- When you want to give up, tell yourself to hold off for just one more day, hour or minute – whatever you can manage
- I may not understand exactly what and how you feel right now, but I care about you and want to help
- I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing and if you want to talk



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