

Mental Health resources: how to help someone who is suicidal

If you think that someone is in urgent danger, is going to try to take their life immediately or has tried, call 999

How can I help someone who is feeling suicidal? If you think that someone may be feeling suicidal, encourage them to talk about how they are feeling. Remember that you don't need to find an answer, or even to completely understand why they feel the way they do. Listening to what they have to say will at least let them know you care.

- let the person know that you care about them and that they are not alone,
- make sure someone is with them if they are in immediate danger,
- try to get professional help for the person feeling suicidal and support for yourself.

Reassure the person that they will not feel this way forever and that they can get help, including help from a doctor.

If you are not sure that someone is feeling suicidal, you could ask:

- "Are you thinking about suicide?" or
- "Are you having thoughts of ending your life?"

These questions might seem direct but it is better to address the person's feelings directly than to skirt around the issue. Most people do not have this sort of conversation every day and so you may feel uncomfortable and unsure of what to say. You can help by being calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

Try to see the world as the person sees it without judging, criticising or blaming them.

What won't help someone who is feeling suicidal? When someone tells you that they are feeling suicidal you may feel like trying to cheer the person up or telling them that they have no reason to feel like that. These are understandable responses but may not help that much. **Someone who wants to end their life will not want:**

- to feel rejected by friends, family or colleagues,
- people to change the subject when they are talking about how they feel,
- to be told that they are wrong or silly,
- to be patronised, criticised or analysed,
- to be told to cheer up or 'snap out of it',
- to be told that they should be grateful for having such a good life.

Reassurance, respect and support can help a person recover at this difficult time.

What if someone is saying they want to end their life now? Talking about suicide can be a plea for help. Don't assume that because someone has talked about suicide they won't try to take their own life. You should always take this seriously.

Try to keep them safe in the short term. It is unlikely that you will be able to make their feelings go away, but you can help by making them see that there are some things worth living for:

- be supportive and accept what they are telling you,
- ask whether they are thinking about ending their life now or soon,
- try and get a better understanding of why,
- ask about their reasons for living and dying and listen to their answers. Try to explore their reasons for living in more detail,
- ask whether they have tried to kill themselves before,
- ask if they have a plan for how they would do it in the future,
- try to make them safe and be open to making reasonable steps to help them,
- follow up any commitments that you agree to.

(Source: www.rethink.org)

Resources

How to get professional help if you think someone is going to take their own life.

This factsheet has advice in more detail including immediate help.

<https://www.rethink.org/carers-family-friends/what-you-need-to-know/suicidal-thoughts-how-to-support-someone>

NHS Advice

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/suicide>

Helplines

These free helplines are there to help when you're feeling down or desperate.

Unless it says otherwise, they're open 24 hours a day, every day.

[Samaritans](#) – for everyone

Call 116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

[Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#) – for men

Call 0800 58 58 58 – 5pm to midnight every day. Visit the [webchat page](#)
<https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/>

[Papyrus](#) – for people under 35

Call 0800 068 41 41 – Monday to Friday 10am to 10pm, weekends 2pm to 10pm, bank holidays 2pm to 5pm

Text 07786 209697

Email pat@papyrus-uk.org

[Childline](#) – for children and young people under 19

Call 0800 1111 – the number won't show up on your phone bill

[The Silver Line](#) – for older people

Call 0800 4 70 80 90