

# If You Or A Friend Feel Suicidal, Consider These Questions.

*Let them know you care by asking about their feelings. Use open, empathic remarks, such as:*

**“You seem really down lately. I’m worried about you.”** It can be important just to let the person know that you care. Suicidal people often feel that no one understands them or takes them seriously, and this kind of statement may help them to feel less isolated.

**“Have you ever thought about killing yourself?”** This question, sensitively asked, does not “give them the idea.” It does let them know that you care enough to bring up this serious and scary subject, and that you will not just laugh at their feelings.

**“Have you ever felt this way before? How did you handle it?”** Helping them to look at how they have coped with problems in the past may give them some ideas for coping with the current situation.

**“What happened that’s making you feel so bad now?”** Looking at what triggered their current feelings can help people begin to see their problems as separate and, hopefully, resolvable.

**“There are people who could help you deal with this.”** Encourage them to get professional help. If they are already in therapy or counseling, encourage them to share these feelings with the professional. If they want to find a therapist or counselor, have them call Teen Line for a referral.

**It doesn’t really help just to reassure them or minimize the problem. For example, try not to say things like:**

**“Don’t worry,” or “it will all work out.”** Suicidal people can’t see far enough into the future to appreciate these remarks. They are hurting now, and these statements can make them feel as if the other

person doesn’t understand how bad their situation seems to them.

**“Cheer up,” or “let’s just go to a movie – you will feel better.”** You may mean well, but to suicidal people these comments can sound like you’re just trying to avoid their feelings. They need to feel that you can handle talking seriously about suicide, or they will not open up to you.

**“I won’t tell anyone.”** If you are worried about a friend, by all means share your concerns with a trusted adult. You may have to break a confidence to help save a life!

## Remember

There may be times when you feel you’ve done everything you can for yourself or your friend, and things still seem bleak. If you let your friend know that you care, that you want to be there for them, and share your concerns with a trusted adult – then you will have done a lot.

It is important to share your feelings with someone who can get you the right help. You can call **Teen Line®** any evening between 6-10 p.m. (PST). Our teens are there to listen to you. They have been trained in ways to help and support other teens. They can help you with what you are feeling and help you figure out what to do next. It’s anonymous and free. Call **800-TLC-TEEN (852-8336)** Toll free in the USA or text **"TEEN"** to **839863** from 6 - 9pm PST to speak to one of our peer counselors. After hours, your call will be directed to **Didi Hirsch's Suicide Prevention Center**. For more information or to download brochures, visit **www.teenlineonline.org**.

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Suicide is the act of intentionally taking one's own life. Many people who end their life by suicide are depressed and feel hopeless in escaping their pain. It is important to remember that not all depressed people consider suicide. However, there are warning signs that may indicate someone is suicidal. Perhaps you have noticed these signs in a friend, acquaintance or even yourself...

# What Is Suicide?

## What Are The Danger Signals?

It may help you to help yourself or a friend if you are alert to warnings like these:

- **hopeless comments**, such as “nothing really matters,” or “I just want to end it all”
- **sleep problems**, including sleeping too little or too much, insomnia, waking up often while sleeping
- **preoccupation with death**, such as fascination with music, art work or poetry with morbid themes
- **school problems**, such as difficulty keeping grades up
- **signs of depression**, such as feelings of worthlessness, social withdrawal, loss of appetite, increased irritability, “down” expression
- **excessive use of alcohol or other drugs**
- **dramatic changes in behavior**, as when a normally quiet person suddenly starts picking fights, or an outgoing person becomes very shy

### Especially...

- **recent loss, or threat of loss, of friend or family member**, through serious illness, death, separation, divorce or change in residence
- **lack of planning for the future**, whether next month or next year
- **giving away important personal possessions** or making out a will
- **sudden change in mood** from depression to cheerfulness, as if the answer to the problem is now clear
- **specific plans**, such as when, where and how an attempt will be made

## How Can You Know If It's Serious?

It's always “serious” – someone who is thinking about suicide is going through some pretty painful times. Teens often feel suicidal and it's always important to help them talk to someone – a friend, therapist, family member or Teen Line.

Although not everyone who feels depressed thinks seriously about suicide, a person may be more in danger of making an attempt:

- **if they have a method planned out**
- **if they have the means to carry out the method**
- **if they have a specific date or time for the attempt**
- **if they know, respect or idealize another person who has attempted or died by suicide**
- **if the anniversary of a major loss (a death, a relationship break-up, etc.) is approaching**

If you become aware of any of the above risks, a trusted adult should be alerted as soon as possible .