



World Suicide Prevention Awareness

If someone you knew talked about having suicidal thoughts, what would you say? What would you do? Those are very difficult questions for anyone—even a mental health professional—to face. But as a friend or family member, you should know what to look for and how to respond.

September has been designated Suicide Prevention Awareness Month in an effort to educate people about the warning signs of suicide and how to respond to them. Warning signs common to suicide include:

- Talking about killing themselves and death
- Threatening or hinting at killing themselves
- Tidying up affairs: drawing up a will, giving away possessions
- Drastic changes in behavior
- Withdrawing from social interaction
- Sudden neglect in appearance
- Self-harming
- Sudden drug or alcohol abuse
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Previous attempts to kill themselves
- Family or peers who have recently attempted to kill themselves or have killed themselves

What can you do?

- **Talk to them.** Be direct.
- **Talk honestly and openly about the subject.** If the person appears to be thinking about self-harm but hasn't indicated any intentions, ask the question, "Are you having thoughts about suicide?" Let the person know that it is okay to share thoughts and feelings with you. Ask when, where and how they plan to kill themselves.
- **Listen.** Refrain from being judgmental. Don't lecture.
- **Acknowledge their feelings.** Be empathetic, patient and compassionate.
- **Don't challenge.** Avoid arguments. Instead, concentrate on listening, understanding and getting help.

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