

How to Deal with Suicide: A Guide from Crisis Text Line

You are enough. You matter. Your life is worth fighting for. Suicide is a leading cause of death. It's also preventable. In U.S. alone, we have the ability to save nearly 45,000 lives every year. Suicide is a leading cause of death. It's also preventable.

But, hold up. Before we get to saving the world, let's check-in. If you're feeling like ending your life, you can always ask for help managing your emotions. Asking for help is brave. You are brave. You are valuable. You are important. And, the world needs you.

How to Get Help If You're Thinking About Ending Your Life

First thing's first: you matter. You are important. You bring light into this world. It's OK to ask for help. You are brave to ask for help. And, we're here for you.

Here are a few ways to get through the next second, minute, hour, and even a whole day.

- Reach out for help.
- Tell a friend. No matter how alone you feel, know that there are so many people in this world who not only want you in this world. And, they want to help you (Hi—have you met us? We're included in this group! See above). Confiding in someone can help you build a support system for times when you are feeling in a really dark place. Nervous about reaching out? Start with a text message like this: "Hey there. I'm feeling really alone right now. Would you mind keeping me company?"
- Distract yourself. Find even one thing that brings you joy. And, hold onto it. Maybe it's listening to your favorite song (listening to music is one of the most common coping tools for our texters), or maybe it's looking into the eyes of your adorable pup. Whatever it may be, find one thing to turn to when you feel in the darkest of places.
- Talk to a pro. If you are thinking about ending your life, chances are you are dealing with really painful emotions. Nobody deserves to feel that way and we are so sorry you do. Reach out to a therapist who can help you work through and process your emotions in a healthy way.

- Go somewhere safe. If you feel like you are a danger to yourself, it's always okay (brave, even!) to call 911 or go to an ER.

Warning Signs

Sometimes, thoughts of suicide are the result of underlying mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. And like any illness, mental illnesses have symptoms—warning signs that someone is feeling like ending their life. Make no mistake, though, not everyone who has a mental illness is suicidal. And, not everyone who contemplates suicide has a mental illness.

When someone is contemplating suicide, they may show changes in the way they act, think, or behave.

Suicidal Behavior: What People Contemplating Suicide Might Say

Someone with suicidal thoughts may talk about:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain (physical or emotional)

Suicidal Behavior: What People Contemplating Suicide Might Do

Someone actively contemplating suicide might act impulsively or recklessly. It might look like:

- Drinking more alcohol and using drugs
- Looking for ways to end their lives, including searching online for possible methods
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating themselves from family, friends, and loved ones
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Saying goodbye to others
- Giving away valued possessions
- Becoming aggressive

Suicidal Behavior: How People Contemplating Suicide Might Feel

Someone thinking about ending their life might struggle with many overwhelming emotions. These include feeling:

- Depressed
- Anxious
- Uninterested
- Irritable
- Humiliated
- Agitated
- Enraged
- Tired

Suicide Risk Factors

The world around us impacts how everyone thinks and behaves. As much as sometimes we all want to make a safe bubble, that is simply not possible. So, both external factors (like relationship challenges, work stress, or trauma) and internal factors (like trouble regulating and processing emotions) can increase the risk of suicide.

1. THE INTERNAL STUFF

Some of the health factors that can leave a person at a higher suicide risk include mental and physical health conditions such as:

- Depression
- Addiction
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Anxiety
- Chronic pain or other serious health condition
- Traumatic brain injury

2. THE EXTERNAL STUFF

Several circumstances in a person's world can increase their likelihood of a suicide attempt. These include:

- Access to lethal means like guns or pills
- Prolonged stress
- Stressful life events or major life changes
- Someone else's suicide, a loved one or even a celebrity or character

3. THE STUFF FROM YOUR PAST

Personal connections to suicide or trauma can greatly increase someone's risk of suicide. Three key risk factors experts and mental health professionals look for are:

- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Childhood abuse, neglect, or trauma

How You Can Prevent Suicide

So, suicide is preventable. But, how? With your help.

We all have our hard stuff. If you have a friend who is contemplating suicide, it's undeniably hard—for them and for you. Sometimes, preventing suicide comes down to having tough conversations with the people who matter to you. As Mother Monster, Lady Gaga, said in her 2019 Grammy's acceptance speech, "If you see someone who is hurting, don't look away." So, let's face this challenge head on—together.

Here are some tips for starting a conversation:

- Listen. Beyoncé said it first in Dreamgirls: listen. And, she was totally right. The most important thing you can do is let the person know that you are available to listen and hear about what is going on in their brain without judgement.
- Ask how you can help. Give the power back to the person that's struggling. Ask how you can be helpful, whether it's sitting with them when they're lonely or helping them choose a doctor.
- Avoid giving advice. As Nora McNerny (host of the podcast about all the hard stuff, "No Happy Endings") says: "Don't should yourself." And, we'll add: "Don't should others." Trying to rush through fixing the situation can make it seem like you're not available to listen.
- Keep it casual. This is a friend you care about, not a formal interview. Grab a cup of coffee, invite them over for the best Netflix binge, or host a study date and mention that you're concerned. Totally cool. Totally casual.
- Let them open up at their pace. If they're not ready to talk, let them know that you're here to listen whenever they're ready.
- Encourage them to reach out for help.

There is help for everyone. There is help for you. We are all in this big, brave world together.