



Suicide Prevention – Starting the Conversation

It's not always easy to talk to someone about suicide/mental health, but when someone's life is at risk, it's more important to ensure their safety than to dance around the subject. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you through the conversation.

1. **ASK – Start the conversation**
 - Be prepared: Practice what you'll say, plan for a time when you don't rush, and come with crisis resources on hand. It is important to be patient, understanding, and provide hope.
 - Using nonjudgmental language, ask directly about suicide. Mention what prompted you to ask, making it clear that you're not asking "out of the blue." If they answer YES to your direct question about suicide, stay calm and don't leave the person alone until more help is obtained.
2. **BE THERE - Listen, express concern, reassure**
 - Listen to your coworker and validate their feelings, let the person know that you are genuinely concerned and that you take their situation seriously.
 - Give them your full attention. Use positive body language and encourage the person to continue with small verbal comments such as 'I see' or 'what happened next?'.
 - Try to leave any questions or comments you may have until the person is done so you don't interrupt them.
3. **KEEP THEM SAFE - Create a safety plan**
 - Create a safety plan together. Ask what will help keep them safe and make sure they don't have access to any lethal means and ask if they will abstain from using drugs or alcohol.
 - Get a verbal commitment that the person will not act on thoughts of suicide until they have met with a professional.
4. **HELP THEM CONNECT - Get help**
 - Provide the resources you have come prepared with.
 - Give a "warm hand" to someone who can help. Help them call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or connect them with a mental health professional. Stay connected.
 - If you feel the situation is critical, take the person to a nearby emergency room or call 911
5. **What NOT to say**



- Don't ask about suicide in a way that indicates you want a "No" for an answer.
- Don't tell the person to do it. This is the most dangerous thing you can say.
- Avoid clichés. Comments like 'Join' or 'You're just having a bad day' aren't helpful.
- Don't promise secrecy. Instead, you can say, "I care too much about you to keep a secret like this. You need help and I'm here to help you get it."

SAFETY REMINDER

Talking about suicide does NOT put the idea in someone's head. Gives them permission to talk about it and they are usually relieved.