

# How to Talk About Suicide Safely

Conversations about suicide can save lives when done safely and compassionately. This guide offers practical steps for opening supportive dialogue while minimizing harm.

- Start with openness: Ask directly but gently, e.g., 'Are you thinking about suicide?'
- Use nonjudgmental language—avoid words like 'crazy' or 'selfish.'
- Listen more than you speak; create space for them to share.
- Acknowledge their feelings: 'It sounds like you're in a lot of pain.'
- Avoid minimizing or offering quick fixes—focus on empathy.
- Do not promise secrecy; safety comes first.
- Encourage professional help: connect them with a therapist or crisis resource.
- If there is immediate risk, call 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, US) or emergency services.
- After the conversation, follow up—check in regularly to show continued support.



# WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE:

The behaviors listed below may be some of the signs that someone is thinking about suicide.

## TALKING ABOUT:



- ▷ Wanting to die
- ▷ Great guilt or shame
- ▷ Being a burden to others

## FEELING:



- ▷ Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
- ▷ Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
- ▷ Unbearable emotional or physical pain

## CHANGING BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS:



- ▷ Making a plan or researching ways to die
- ▷ Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will
- ▷ Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- ▷ Displaying extreme mood swings
- ▷ Eating or sleeping more or less
- ▷ Using drugs or alcohol more often

**If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.**

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**  
**Call or text 988**  
**Chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)**



National Institute  
of Mental Health

[www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention)

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