

SUICIDE PREVENTION

A lot of people who think about or attempt suicide consider it as the only solution to the feelings that seem impossible to deal with and the intensity of these emotions prevent them from seeing the alternative solutions. Thoughts of suicide are usually temporary. It is possible to relieve the pain that seems to be impossible to deal with or it is possible to increase the ways of coping with it. It is important to remember that "Nobody has to live through this period alone". The first and most important step is to seek help. Rights and wrongs about suicide

Wrong: "If a person talks about suicide, he/she will not really do it"

Right: Almost all of the people who had attempted or completed suicide had given some signals before they acted. Hence, everyone, who implicitly or explicitly talks about killing him/herself, should be taken seriously and something has to be done immediately about it.

Wrong: "A person who tries to kill him/herself is a lunatic."

Right: Only 10% of the people who think about or attempted suicide have poor contact with reality. Being sane does not mean not having a very difficult time that may make someone to consider killing him/herself.

Wrong: "If a person had decided to commit suicide, nothing can stop him/her."

Right: Most of the people who think about committing a suicide do not want to die; they just want to give an end to the pain. However, even if this desire is very strong, it is temporary. The fact that a person is still alive means that there is something that holds him/her. In addition, if s/he shared his/her thoughts with someone else, this is a cry for help and means that something can be done about it.

Wrong: "Talking about suicide gives the person the idea."

Right: Talking about suicide to a person with suicidal intentions will not put fatal ideas into his/her head. On the contrary, talking about suicide openly is the best thing to do. This shows that you care about him/her and s/he can comfortably share his/her pain with you.

Wrong: "If someone had tried to kill him/herself before, the odds are low that s/he will do it again." **Right:** In contrast, the possibility of committing a suicide is higher for a person who had tried it before than who did not.

Warning signals

Mostly, marked changes happen in the behavior of the person who is planning to commit suicide. If someone you know,

- Talks implicitly or explicitly about killing him/herself (such as 'It's not worth living', 'World is better without me', 'I can't stand', 'It's over, I will kill myself')
- Experienced or witnessed a traumatic incident,
- Has a disturbed eating and sleep pattern,
- Is isolating him/herself from friends and social environments; is less interested in hobbies, school, work; does not care about his/her physical appearance,
- Engaging in behaviors such as writing a will, saying good-bye, giving away important property.
- Has previous suicide attempt,
- Taking unnecessary risks,
- Seems to be tired, worn-out, distressed; is unable to concentrate,
- Or suddenly seems to be relieved and peaceful while s/he was feeling depressed, S/he is under risk and may be thinking about committing suicide.

How can you help if someone you know is thinking about suicide?

- If a friend of yours or someone close to you is thinking about committing suicide, it is a very difficult experience for you, too. You may consider getting help to deal with this.
- The most important thing to do is to talk to him/her.
- Listen to him/her in an open, interested, calm and non-judgmental way. Let him/her talk about whatever s/he wants as long as s/he wishes. Try to understand what s/he is feeling.
- You don't have to say magical words. Most of the time, showing that you care and that s/he is not alone with the pain is the most important thing.
- Avoid arguing and giving advice. Do not question the accuracy of his/her feelings and/or suicide. Do not give a lecture about the value of life.

- Mention that you are glad that s/he talked to you. Say supportive and encouraging things. Offer alternatives. Give hope.
- Ask about his intention and plan to commit suicide, learn about the time, the method and accessibility to the materials s/he is planning to use. Don't hesitate to talk about these openly. Don't be shocked, remain as calm as possible.
- If the time and method are determined, this constitutes an urgent risk. Take it seriously. Do not leave the person alone even for a second and seek help. If there is anything around that s/he can use, remove it. A suicidal person should be seen by a professional or a medical doctor. You can take him/her to the hospital or call a doctor. Do not panic and do not hesitate to call for emergency help.
- If there is no urgent risk, offer your help and support him/her to get professional help. You may be present when s/he takes the appointment or goes to the first session.
- Never keep a suicide plan secret. Your friend may ask you not to tell anybody about the plan. However, never take this responsibility alone. If there is a serious situation take the risk of regretting something you have done, rather than something you haven't.
- Do not embarrass or judge him/her in order to change his/her idea. This only increases feelings of guilt and hopelessness. Avoid saying something that may make him/her feel worse. Do not minimize what s/he is going through by saying that this does not necessitate committing suicide. The size of the problem does not matter; the important thing is the extent to which it affects the person.
- Never say that s/he cannot kill him/herself.
- Emphasize that this is temporary and s/he can get help. In fact, most people think about suicide from time to time but these thoughts are temporary.
- Follow how s/he is doing. It is important to keep supporting him/her even if there is no urgent risk.

If you are thinking about committing suicide...

Remember that if you are experiencing an intense physical or emotional pain, your perceptions and thoughts are highly influenced by this pain. Ending the pain and ending your life are not the same. Relief is something you can feel only when you are alive. Thinking about suicide is not insanity, weakness or flaw. Thinking about suicide, wanting to die does not necessarily mean doing it. A lot of people think about committing suicide and most of them live, because crises are temporary.

- Give yourself time. Wait for 24 hours or a week before you do anything. Don't forget that feeling and doing are two different things. Wanting to kill yourself does not mean that you will or you should do it at that time.
- There are people who will be with you during these hard times, will not argue with you, will not judge you, will not try to change the subject or will not try to hospitalize you. They just care about you. It may be a therapist, a friend or someone from your family. Within the 24 hours or 1 week you have given yourself, talk about how you feel to someone who will care.
- Stay away from the situations at which and materials by which you may harm yourself.
- Avoid drinking too much or using other substances.
- Making a program of what you will do each day may work. Try not to add things that you believe you will fail at doing or seem difficult to you nowadays. Do not forget to add an at least 30-minute activity, which you used to enjoy before. For example listening to music, taking a walk, having a warm bath...
- During the day, see sunlight for at least half an hour.
- You may not feel sociable but talk to other people. It may be about your feelings or about totally different things. It may help to join people a bit more.
- Remember that the things that seem to be endless will end, what you are going through is not permanent.
- If you can't sleep, eat and/or work, if you believe that the pain will not end, or if you can't think healthily, get help from a professional immediately.

For More Information

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