

## How can I help someone who is feeling suicidal?

If you think that someone may be feeling suicidal, encourage them to talk about how they are feeling.

You may feel uncomfortable talking about suicidal feelings. You may not know what to say. This is entirely normal and understandable.

### It might help to:

- Let them know that you care about them and that they are not alone
- Empathise with them
  - You could say something like,  
*'I can't imagine how painful this is for you, but I would like to try to understand'*
- Be non-judgemental
- Don't criticise or blame them
- Repeat their words back to them in your own words
  - This shows that you are listening
  - Repeating information can also make sure that you have understood them properly
- Ask about their reasons for living and dying and listen to their answers
- Try to explore their reasons for living in more detail
- Ask if they have felt like this before
  - If so, ask how their feelings changed last time
- Reassure them that they will not feel this way forever
- Encourage them to focus on getting through the day rather than focussing on the future
- Ask them if they have a plan for ending their life
  - Ask what the plan is
- Encourage them to seek help that they are comfortable with – such as
  - Help from a doctor or counsellor
  - Support through a charity such as the Samaritans
- Follow up any commitments that you agree to
- Make sure someone is with them if they are in immediate danger
- Try to get professional help for the person feeling suicidal
- Get support for yourself

Remember that you don't need to find an answer, or even to completely understand why they feel the way they do.

Listening to what they have to say will at least let them know you care.

If you are not sure that someone is feeling suicidal, ask:

- "Are you thinking about suicide?" or
- "Are you having thoughts of ending your life?"
- ❖ These questions are direct
- ❖ It is better to address the person's feelings directly rather than avoiding the issue
- ❖ Asking about suicide won't make it more likely to happen

## What won't help someone who is feeling suicidal?

When someone tells you that they are feeling suicidal your response may be to:

- Try and find an easy solution
- Tell them to 'cheer up', 'pull themselves together', 'man up' or 'snap out of it,'
- Change the subject
- Tell them that
- They have no reason to feel like that
- They shouldn't feel like that
- They should be grateful for having a good life, or
- Tell them that are being silly

**These responses are unlikely to be helpful.**

**They may make someone feel:**

- |                              |            |              |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| - Rejected                   | - Unheard  | - Alone      |
| - Like 'no one understands,' | - Guilty   | - Patronised |
| - Criticised                 | - Analysed |              |

Reassurance, respect and support can help someone to recover from a difficult time.

## What if someone is saying they want to end their life now?

- ❖ Talking about suicide can be a plea for help
- ❖ Don't assume that someone won't attempt to take their own life if they talk about suicide
- ❖ Always take suicidal feelings seriously

If you talk to someone about their feelings and it seems as though they want to end their life soon, try to keep them safe in the short term.

## How do I keep them safe?

It is unlikely that you will be able to make their feelings go away, but you can help them by:

- Not leaving them on their own
- Talking to them - see the p 1 of this doc for more information
- Seeking professional help - see 'What Services can Help' doc for more information
- Helping them to create a crisis plan
- Removing items that they can end their life with

**The removal of items will depend on what their immediate plan is to end their life.**

Examples include:

- Sharp objects such as razor blades and knives
- Cleaning products
- Drugs
- Belts, cords, wires and rope