

# Personal Safety Assurance Worksheet

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A suicidal person may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted. Most people who commit suicide don't want to die—they just want to stop hurting. Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously.

If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. But talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life. Speak up if you're concerned and seek professional help immediately! Through understanding, reassurance, and support, you can help your loved one overcome thoughts of suicide. **Call the Crisis Line 800 273 8255 - Veterans press 1**

## What are the times, situations or behaviors that can lead to or may increase the risk of self harm?

- Negative feelings such as sadness, worry, hopelessness, anger, or \_\_\_\_\_
- Difficulty sleeping, increased anxiety and tension, loss of pleasure or confused about my meaning in life, or \_\_\_\_\_
- Conflict or stress with my spouse, family, friend, employer or \_\_\_\_\_
- Change of (or withdrawal from) a relationship due to death, divorce, break-up, etc.
- Financial, housing or legal problems or \_\_\_\_\_
- Physical health issues such as \_\_\_\_\_
- Alcohol and or drug use, impulsive or dangerous behavior such as \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## What actions can be taken to address and reduce the risks?

- Talking with a friend, family, counselor, minister/priest/rabbi venting my emotions in a safe place with a trusted person, asking for help in solving problems
- Relaxation (deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxations, thinking about a favorite place and time)
- Reading a book, listening to music, walking, exercising, cooking, gardening, \_\_\_\_\_
- Spending time with family and friends, playing with pets
- Taking medications as directed by my doctor
- Call my doctor, go to the ER and ask for help
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Talking to a friend or family member about their suicidal thoughts and feelings can be extremely difficult for anyone. But if you're unsure whether someone is suicidal, the best way to find out is to ask. You can't make a person suicidal by showing that you care. In fact, giving a suicidal person the opportunity to express his or her feelings can provide relief from loneliness and pent-up negative feelings, and may prevent a suicide attempt.

**Ways to start a conversation about suicide:**

- I have been feeling concerned about you lately.
- Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing.
- I wanted to check in with you because you haven't seemed yourself lately.

**Questions you can ask:**

- When did you begin feeling like this?
- Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?
- How can I best support you right now?
- Have you thought about getting help?

**What you can say that helps:**

- You are not alone in this. I'm here for you.
- You may not believe it now, but the way you're feeling will change.
- I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help.
- When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold off for just one more day, hour, minute — whatever you can manage.

**When talking to a suicidal person**

**Do:**

- Be yourself. Let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone. The right words are often unimportant. If you are concerned, your voice and manner will show it.
- Listen. Let the suicidal person unload despair, ventilate anger. No matter how negative the conversation seems, the fact that it exists is a positive sign.
- Be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting. Your friend or family member is doing the right thing by talking about his/her feelings.

- Offer hope. Reassure the person that help is available and that the suicidal feelings are temporary. Let the person know that his or her life is important to you.
- If the person says things like, "I'm so depressed, I can't go on," ask the question: "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" You are not putting ideas in their head; you are showing that you are concerned, that you take them seriously, and that it's OK for them to share their pain with you.

**But don't:**

- Argue with the suicidal person. Avoid saying things like: "You have so much to live for," "Your suicide will hurt your family," or "Look on the bright side."
- Act shocked, lecture on the value of life, or say that suicide is wrong.
- Promise confidentiality. Refuse to be sworn to secrecy. A life is at stake and you may need to speak to a mental health professional in order to keep the suicidal person safe. If you promise to keep your discussions secret, you may have to break your word.
- Offer ways to fix their problems, or give advice, or make them feel like they have to justify their suicidal feelings. It is not about how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting your friend or loved one.
- Blame yourself. You can't "fix" someone's depression. Your loved one's happiness or lack thereof, is not your responsibility.

Adapted from: *Metanoia.org*