

The Qualities of Helpful People

Helpful people notice signs of suicidal behavior such as:

- **Feelings:** hopeless, helpless, very sad, agitated, anxious
- **Actions/Events:** drug or alcohol use, talk of death, a major fight or argument, isolation from usual friends and/or activities, aggression
- **Changes:** in personality, behaviors, sleeping and eating patterns, interests and hobbies, appearance; sudden improvement in mood after being down or withdrawn
- **Threats:** statements about death and dying, threat to kill self if something doesn't go right, a plan for suicide, making a will or giving away favorite things, self-injury, or any suicidal gesture or attempt
- **Situations:** recent loss, breakup, or getting into trouble

What to Do:

1. Show You Care

- a. Listen without judging or giving advice.
- b. Take all talk of suicide seriously.
- c. Stay calm, stay with your friend.

2. Ask about Suicide

- a. Ask about suicide very directly: "Are you thinking about suicide?"
- b. "Are you wishing you were dead?"
- c. "Are you planning how you will kill yourself?"

3. Get Help

- a. Take action sooner rather than later.
- b. Have your friend identify a trusted adult and offer to go with him or her to talk to that adult.
- c. Call a crisis line.
- d. Offer help/hope in any way you can.
- e. Know your own limits.
- f. Ask a trusted adult for help, even if your friend resists.

What to Avoid:

- Do not argue with a suicidal person.
- Do not offer simple solutions.
- Do not promise secrecy. Keeping a potential suicide a secret is a form of assuming responsibility.
- Do not treat the situation lightly, even if your friend begins to joke about it.
- Do not challenge your friend or suggest drugs or alcohol as a solution.
- Do not leave your friend alone unless you sense personal danger.
- Do not try to be the only person to rescue your friend. Get help.
- Do not try to forcefully remove a gun from anyone. Call for help.