



## Suicide Prevention and Awareness

If you suspect that a student is considering suicide, talk about it immediately. Take it seriously and don't dismiss it as acting out, a bid for attention, or teenage drama. Contrary to popular belief, talking about suicide doesn't plant suicidal ideas in someone's head. In fact, addressing the topic head-on can do the very opposite. It can help them identify a problem and know how to ask for help if they have suicidal thoughts or behaviors. If the student mentions wanting to die or wishing they were dead, in the moment, it is okay to encourage them to talk about their distress.

### Strategies for Getting Students to Talk

- Encourage the student to describe what they're feeling. Say something like, "I had no idea things were so bad for you, talk to me about what's going on."
- Ask the student to share whether a specific incident/precipitating event led to suicidal thoughts. Ask a question such as, "What happened? I want to know more, it might help to talk about it."
- Don't be afraid to be direct. Ask questions such as, "Have you considered hurting yourself?" "Do you have a specific plan or thought about how you'd hurt yourself?"
- Don't invalidate the student's feelings. Avoid saying things that may be perceived as empty or unhelpful such as, "You should appreciate all you have in life," or "I think you're overreacting." Those reactions downplay your teen's pain.
- Show acceptance. Listen without verbalizing judgement or disagreeing with their statements or feelings.

### Offering Emotional Support

After gaining a better understanding, it's important to offer emotional support. Use the suggestions that best fit you, the student and the situation:

- Let the student know you understand that they feel miserable. Say something like, "It sounds like you've given up" or "I think you feel there's no way out."
- Let the student know you are deeply concerned about their well-being.



- Be compassionate. Say to the student, "I do not want you to hurt yourself and will do everything possible to keep you from committing suicide."
- Gently point out that suicide is not a solution. Try saying something such as, "I know there are options that could help; I'd like you to try them."
- Provide reassurance. Say something like, "You are not alone. I am here to help you now that I understand how bad things really are for you."

### Supporting a Suicidal Student

- Make Safety a Top Priority: A student who is talking about suicide could be in immediate danger to himself or herself. Take the comments seriously. There are a few things you can do to make safety a top priority.
  1. Stay with the student—make sure they are not left alone during this crisis.
  2. Immediately reach out to the teens parents/guardians and a crisis counselor.
- Connect the Student to Follow Up Care: Once the immediate danger has been addressed, providing resources for ongoing help is equally important. Penn Foundation has a variety of children and adolescent services to help individuals struggling.

## Additional Support and Resources

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** - Dial 988 (or 1-800-273-8255)
- **St. Luke's Mental Health Walk-in Center** – 610-577-0555
- **County Hotlines**
  - Lehigh: 610-782-3127
  - Northampton: 610-252-9060
  - Berks: 610-379-2007
  - Bucks: 800-499-7455
  - Carbon/Monroe/Pike: 800-338-6467
  - Lackawanna: 570-348-6100
  - Luzerne/Wyoming: 570-829-1341
  - Montgomery: 855-634-4673
  - Schuylkill: 570-628-4731
  - Susquehanna: 570-348-6100
  - Warren (NJ): 908-454-5141