

Steps To Prevent The Suicide Of Friends And Family Members

The College of Mental Health Counseling at www.collegemhc.com urges the general public to learn and distribute these steps to prevent the suicide of friends and family members.

Please print or distribute this report throughout the internet and send it to all your contacts and friends.

This procedure is adapted by permission from *Effective Counseling Skills* written by Daniel Keeran, MSW, for counselors and **for the general public** found here <http://www.amazon.com/Effective-Counseling-Skills-therapeutic-statements/dp/1442177993>

Just as CPR has been promoted to save lives, it is vital that the general public knows how to recognize suicide risk and prevent suicide. Here are some steps:

1. **Notice if the person appears quiet and withdrawn**, oversleeps, has crying episodes, has loss of appetite and energy, appears dishevelled, the gaze is downward, the voice tone is flat, consistently negative comments, irritability, or says things like, "Life's not worth living," or "I hate my life," etc.
2. Ask: "How would you **rate your mood right now** on a scale of zero to ten with zero meaning life's not worth living and ten meaning life is great?"
3. If the person rates the mood as 5 or under, ask: "Have you had any **thoughts of suicide** or of harming yourself?" *
4. If the person indicates yes, go to the next step. If the person says, "**I don't know**," hear this as a "yes" to the question in #3.
5. Ask: "Have you **thought about how** you might end your life?" If the person says yes, the risk is increased.
6. Ask: "**What have you thought** about as how you might do it?" If the means is ineffective or non-lethal, such as cutting wrists, risk is lower. If the means is lethal such as using a gun or jumping from a bridge, etc., risk is higher.
7. Regardless of the means, ask: "**Can we agree together** that if you have thoughts of killing yourself, you will speak to me personally (not my voice mail) before carrying out a plan to harm yourself?"
8. If the person says "no" or "I don't know," to the question in #7, say: "What I am hearing is that you are in a lot of pain right now and thinking of ending your life, so I am **wanting you to go to the emergency room** right now and get some help to feel better right away. Will you go? I will make sure you get there safely. Is there a family member or someone I can call to go with you?" Or tell the person you will go with them yourself.
9. Arrange for the person **to be accompanied** to the emergency room, and call ahead to tell emergency staff you are coming.
10. If the person refuses, then ask the person to wait there with someone while you **call police** in another room to report that the person has threatened suicide with lethal means. Ask the police to come and accompany the person to the emergency room.

*Note: If the person rates the mood as 6 or over, after feeling consistently depressed, and s/he now reports life is great and s/he is smiling, the risk may be increased because s/he has **decided to end their life** and have made all arrangements.

More practical counseling skills are available through online courses at <http://www.collegemhc.com>