

Helping Someone Who is Struggling

Do you have a friend or family member who is going through a rough time? Stay alert for indications that someone may be having suicidal thoughts or need additional support. Warning signs include:

- ▶ Talking about wanting to die or making a plan
- ▶ Feeling hopeless, trapped, or like they are a burden to others
- ▶ Chronic emotional or physical pain
- ▶ Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- ▶ Mood swings
- ▶ Unusual or erratic eating or sleeping habits

In addition, some people may have conditions that put them at greater risk of suicide or self-harm, such as:

- ▶ Depression or anxiety
- ▶ A mental health and/or chronic physical condition
- ▶ Substance abuse
- ▶ Experiencing a traumatic event, such as an accident, natural disaster, or violent incident
- ▶ A history of previous self-harm or suicide attempts
- ▶ A difficult family history
- ▶ The death of a friend or loved one (especially a death by suicide)
- ▶ Access to weapons

If you are worried about a friend or loved one, it is important to reach out. These simple steps will help you express your concern:

- 1. Ask how the person is doing.** If they have made specific statements about harming themselves, ask if they are considering suicide.
- 2. Express your support.** Tell the person “I am here for you and I want to help.”
- 3. Ensure safety.** If the person is having suicidal thoughts, remove their access to weapons or pills. Ask them to promise that they will reach out if they feel the urge to harm themselves. When in doubt, take the person to the emergency room or call 911.
- 4. Create an action plan.** Make a list of people your loved one can contact if they are having a bad moment. It may also be helpful to suggest activities they can engage in (such as drawing, writing in a journal, or watching a favorite TV show) if they need to self-soothe.
- 5. Encourage the person to seek professional help.** A physician, counselor, or LifeMatters (if they are a co-worker or immediate family member) are all good options. In addition, they can call 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.
- 6. Follow up.** Check in with the person regularly. Remember that people have good and bad days.

Helping someone who is struggling may bring up difficult feelings related to past experiences. LifeMatters can help you set boundaries and maintain your own self-care. Call anytime.

Call **LifeMatters®** by Empathia toll-free anytime.
1-800-367-7474

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