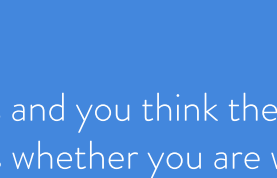


If you're worried about a friend

WE GOT YOU



SELF SPACE

If someone has hurt themselves and you think their injuries are life-threatening, call an ambulance on 999. You can do this whether you are with them in person or not. You will need to be able to give a location.

HELLO

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to helping a friend who's thinking about suicide, but you can never go wrong by showing compassion and support.

1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts
1 in 14 people self-harm
1 in 15 people attempt suicide [1]

Despite the staggering frequency of suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts and self-harm, we are still not talking about it enough.

Suicide is the most devastating consequence of mental ill-health and the effects are shattering. Research has found that every suicide directly affects 135 people – that's friends, family, colleagues, and the communities in which we live.

Recessions, unemployment, loneliness, austerity measures, socio-economic status, a relationship breakdown and periods of chronic depression are just some of the factors involved in an increased risk of suicide.

When we or someone we love is suicidal, we are convinced that the seasons have stopped and will never turn again. We become stuck in a kind of psychological winter, withdrawn and frozen in hopeless thought, not able to see that things can, and will, change.

The fact that you're here, reading this, means that you are a good friend. Here are 6 things that you can do to support a friend who is feeling suicidal. They're written by therapists and people who have had lived experiences of feeling suicidal or in supporting someone they love who has felt suicidal. We are so, so grateful for everyone who submitted ideas, shared their experiences and contributed to the making of this guide. We couldn't have done it without you.

Jodie and Chance (Founders)

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1. SPOT THE SIGNS

It's not always easy to notice when someone is feeling rubbish. So many of us grit our teeth and wear a smile, often not revealing anything about how we're really feeling. So when it comes to being worried about a friend, our gut feelings can tell us a lot. If something feels a bit off, if they haven't quite been themselves – trust your gut and keep an eye out for any of these signs:

- Hopelessness. It is spread across most of the signs that someone is feeling suicidal. They might feel hopeless about their life or parts of their life, and they might not be able to see their situation ever getting better.
- Isolating themselves, not answering their phone, not texting back or hanging out as much with friends, family or people around them.
- They often appear anxious and agitated.
- They have often shared that they've not slept well, or sleep too much.
- They talk about suicide (sometimes they might joke about dying).
- They talk and act in a way that suggests their life has no purpose.
- They lose interest in their appearance and hygiene as they see no point or it feels like too much effort.
- They act recklessly and engage in risky activities, not being bothered about the consequences.
- They start to abuse drugs or alcohol or use more drugs or alcohol than they usually do.
- They uncharacteristically have episodes of sudden rage and anger.
- Giving away their possessions, saying goodbye to people as if they're not going to see them again.

2. CHAT TO THEM

Talking openly and directly about our concerns for someone does not make suicide more likely.

If a person does not come right out and tell you, but you think they may be suicidal, start the conversation. It is important to be direct in your questioning. It is okay to use the word suicide.

By asking about it, you are letting them know that they can open up to you. For someone who has been experiencing thoughts of suicide but has been too scared to tell someone, having you broach the subject first can be a huge relief. Be persistent in reaching out, it will mean something to see/hear texts and messages.

3. ASSESS THE RISK

After someone tells you they have been thinking about suicide, try and assess how urgent the situation is.

Does the person have a plan? How detailed is that plan? Do they have a where and when? What are their means? Have they attempted suicide before? (There's often a higher risk of suicide if they have attempted it before).

Ask them what kind of support(s) they have in their life right now (besides you). Are they seeing a therapist? Are there other people in their life who they feel comfortable talking to?

Ask about their safety plan. They might have created a safety plan with the help of a therapist if they've had thoughts of suicide before. On it could be:

- Coping techniques to get through crisis periods.
- A list of reasons to reconsider suicide.
- Contact information for support people.
- Steps to get to a safe place.

[\[Find a template for a safety plan here\]](#)

4. LISTEN WELL

Listen actively to loud they want to die. Let them speak openly and honestly and remain calm as they do so. Allow them to say their reasons out loud because this can release emotions and help give them a different perspective about their reasons for dying. Listen to what they have to say before you respond. Don't talk over them in your eagerness to change their mind. By listening attentively you can convey to the person that you care and are empathetic to their situation.

MIRROR

"What I'm hearing you say is..." "It seems like..."

"Let me check my understanding..."

VALIDATE

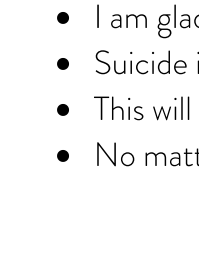
"It makes sense to me that you... given that..."

"It is understandable that this is so difficult because..."

EMPATHISE

"If this was happening to me, I would also feel really overwhelmed..."

"I can really see how shit and painful this is..."



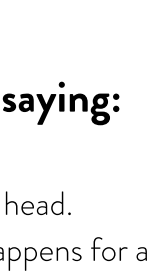
Things the Self Space Community felt reassured hearing:

- I am here for you, whatever you need.
- Let's take this one moment at a time.
- You are not alone.
- It's ok for you not to talk too much, but I'm here whenever you want to.
- I want to help you.
- Know that this isn't forever.
- You are so loved.
- Things will change and things will get better.
- That sounds so painful, and I appreciate you sharing that with me. How can I help?
- I am glad you are in my life because...
- Suicide is a permanent solution to what could well be a temporary problem.
- This will pass.
- No matter how dark the place you are in, you will find the strength to get through.



Things the Self Space Community felt reassured doing:

- Watching a movie together.
- Eating food together.
- Sleeping close to each other if that is helpful.
- Thinking about the next hour not too far ahead.
- Heavy blankets and sharing cosy spaces.
- Going for a walk.
- Being together, even in silence.
- Holding hands.



Try to avoid saying:

- It's all in your head.
- Everything happens for a reason.
- Pull yourself together.
- It could be worse.
- It is not as bad as...
- At least...
- Think of others.
- This is positive - avoid trying to jolly things along.
- This is selfish.
- You are being attention-seeking or dramatic.



5. SIGNPOST CLEARLY

There will be times when you will need to signpost to services that are designed to support people who feel suicidal, in the UK, they include:

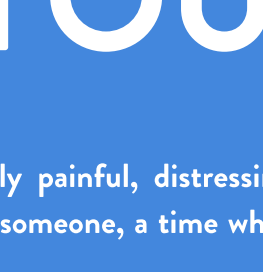
Samaritans: 116 123 (24 hrs) or email jo@samaritans.org
Call any time, day or night

Papyrus: 0800 068 4141 (for help with suicidal thoughts for under 35s)
Every Day 9:00 am to 12:00 am (midnight)

Shout 24/7: text 'Shout' to 85258
Text any time, day or night.

CALM: 0800 585 858
Every Day 5:00 pm to 12:00 am

Self Space: hey@theselfspace.com or www.theselfspace.com
Book time with us and use code SUPPORT for 10% off your first 1:1 session



6. TAKE CARE OF YOU

Supporting someone we love who is experiencing suicidal thoughts can be such an incredibly painful, distressing and heartbreaking experience. There may come a time when you feel unable to continue supporting someone, a time when you come to the edges of your capacity.

You can only do so much to help on your own. If you begin feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or scared, after signposting talk to other people in their life, think alongside them about their network of support. Encourage them to connect with trusted friends, family members, healthcare providers and others who can offer compassionate support. Don't forget your own self-care:

- Seek your own support from professionals (Samaritans, CALM, your GP, therapists).
- Lean into people who can hold you.
- Prioritise rest and time spent doing nourishing things.
- Know and honour your own capacity.
- Know that you might do everything you possibly can, but that still might not stop someone from taking their own life. You can not be 100% responsible for the life of another person.

Thank you to everyone that stepped forward to offer their experiences. We hear, we see, we've got you.

SELF SPACE