Warning signs may help you determine if someone is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss or change. Signs include:

The first three signs above require immediate action. Take these steps:

1. If the danger for self-harm seems imminent, call 911.
2. Stay with the person (or make sure the person is in a private, secure place with another caring person) until you can get further help.
3. Contact the EAP or HR Department and they will help you decide what to do. Provide any background information that may be helpful.
4. Contact the National Help Line at 800.662.HELP and follow their guidance.
5. Continue to stay in contact with the person and pay attention to how he or she is doing.

The “S” Word
Talking about suicide will not give someone thoughts they did not already have. Rather, it will let that individual know you are there for them, open for any conversation. You will be a source of support if things become difficult in the future.

ASSESS
and know the warning signs.

Warning signs may help you determine if someone is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss or change. Signs include:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated or behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

The most effective way to prevent suicide is to increase awareness of the warning signs and to intervene by reaching out to the person in distress.
ASK

if the person is thinking about suicide.

Be direct. Use specific words.

- Have you had thoughts of suicide?
- Do you ever feel so bad that you think about suicide?
- Do you have a plan to kill yourself or take your life?
- Have you thought about when you would do it (today, tomorrow, next week)?
- Have you thought about what method you would use?

LISTEN

without judgment. Let the person talk without interruption and make them feel heard.

AVOID the following:

- Minimizing their problems or shaming a person into changing their mind.
- Sharing your opinion or jumping to conclusions.
- Trying to convince a person suffering that it’s not that bad or that they have everything to live for. It may increase their feelings of guilt and hopelessness.
- Arguing, preaching or challenging the person.
- Making promises (like keeping their secret).

Don’t feel like you must give advice, problem solve, or know all the answers. Just talking with someone as they try to navigate their distress can be very powerful.
RESPOND
with compassion and care.

What to do:

• Remain calm and convey care.
• Acknowledge that they are in pain and that their pain is REAL.
• Stay with the person.
• Remove sharp objects or lethal means.
• Go with the person to the ER or mental health clinic.
• In an Emergency—Call 911. Don’t leave the person alone.

Helpful Phrases

“You are not alone. I’m here for you.”
“I may not understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help.”
“We will get through this together.”

FOLLOW-UP
with the person. Support their transition from crisis to recovery.

The initial event is often just the beginning of their journey. You can help them overcome challenges after a mental health crisis.

• Recognize people often experience increased loneliness or despair.
• Continue to follow up and show continued support by checking in.
• Encourage self-care such as physical activity, hobbies they enjoy, mindfulness exercises, etc.
• Provide reminders about the support and resources available through the employee, member or student assistance program.

SOURCE: National Council for Suicide Prevention

If you or someone you know needs emotional support and help, contact your Perspectives EAP, MAP or SAP. Counselors are available 24/7 at 800.456.6327