

HOW YOU CAN OFFER HELP AND SUPPORT

If a friend or family member is suicidal, the best way to help is by offering an empathetic, listening ear. Let your loved one know that they're not alone and that you care. Don't take responsibility, however, for healing your loved one. You can offer support, but you can't make a suicidal person get better. They have to make a personal commitment to recovery. It takes a lot of courage to help someone who is suicidal.

LEVEL OF SUICIDE RISK

LOW



Some suicidal thought. No suicide plan. The person says they won't attempt suicide.

MODERATE



Suicidal thoughts. Vague plan that isn't very lethal. Says they won't attempt suicide

HIGH



Suicidal thoughts. Specific plan that is highly lethal. Says they won't attempt suicide.

SEVERE



Suicidal thoughts. Specific plan that is highly lethal. The person says they will attempt suicide

TO HELP A SUICIDAL PERSON

Get professional help. Do everything in your power to get a suicidal person the help they need. Call a crisis line for advice and referrals. Encourage the person to see a mental health professional, help locate a treatment facility, or take them to a doctor's appointment.

Follow-up on treatment. If the doctor prescribes medication, make sure your friend or loved one takes it as directed. Be aware of possible side effects and be sure to notify the physician if the person seems to be getting worse. It often takes time and persistence to find the medication or therapy that's right for a particular person

Be proactive. Those contemplating suicide often don't believe they can be helped, so you may have to be more proactive at offering assistance. Saying, "Call me if you need anything" is too vague. Don't wait for the person to call you or even to return your calls. Drop by, call again, invite the person out.

Encourage positive lifestyle changes, such as a healthy diet, plenty of sleep, and getting out in the sun or into nature for at least 30 minutes each day. Exercise is also extremely important as it releases endorphins, relieves stress, and promotes emotional well-being.

Make a safety plan. Help the person develop a set of steps they promise to follow during a suicidal crisis. It should identify any triggers that may lead to a suicidal crisis, such as an anniversary of a loss, alcohol, or stress from relationships. Also include contact numbers for the person's doctor or therapist, as well as friends and family members who will help in an emergency.

Continue your support over the long haul. Even after the immediate suicidal crisis has passed, stay in touch with the person, periodically checking in or dropping by. Your support is vital to ensure your friend or loved one remains on the recovery track.