



**Ask them
about suicide**

samh.org.uk

SAMH

Scottish Action for Mental Health

Thinking about suicide is very common – in fact, one in 20 people have thoughts of suicide.

If you're worried about someone, asking them if they are having thoughts of suicide could give them the permission they need to open up. In fact, it could even save their life.

If their answer is yes, there's three things you can do to support them:

I LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

Talking with someone about their thoughts or feelings of suicide *is helpful*.

The best way to initially help someone who is feeling suicidal is to listen carefully to them and to show them kindness and compassion. You don't have to agree with them but try to understand how they feel. Many people just want to be heard.

Suicide is much more about escaping the feeling of being trapped by mental pain than the actual ending of one's life.



2 HELP THEM TO MAKE A SAFE PLAN

Work with the person to make a **safety plan*** to use until their mood lifts or the thoughts of suicide pass. This should include:

- **Recognising the warning signs** – e.g. very negative thoughts, sleeping a lot, feeling trapped, hopeless, overwhelmed or numb, risky behaviours or self-neglect
- **Identify coping strategies** – an activity they enjoy or can distract them e.g. a walk, a bath, video games, going for a drive, sport or exercise, watching TV, music
- **Identify people or distracting social settings** – list places or people they can meet or get in touch with to provide a distraction. *Avoid bars, pubs, nightclubs, casinos, or gambling shops*
- **Identify chosen family/friends** – make a list of people they can contact when they are feeling suicidal, people they can trust and feel safe talking to. *Not anyone under the age of 18*
- **Identify professionals who can help** – e.g. GP surgery, crisis helplines, emergency services, NHS24
- **Make the environment safe** – e.g. securely lock medications away, remove or secure lengths of rope, cable, belts, dressing gown cords if necessary from the home and garden, prevent access to firearms.*

*R. O'Connor 2021, G. Brown & B. Stanley 2017

3 MAKE SURE THEY KNOW WHERE TO GET FURTHER SUPPORT

If you have serious concerns for someone's safety *it's important to call 999* and to alert the most appropriate service for the situation. Here are some key indicators to look for:

- The person cannot keep themselves safe and/or they are putting themselves in harm's way
- The person is struggling to understand how they will cope or cannot be distracted
- They have disappeared or their whereabouts are unknown.

For help finding support and services, call **NHS 24** on **111**

To speak to someone at any time, day or night, contact the Samaritans on **116 123**, or **jo@samaritans.org**

For information and resources, visit: **samh.org.uk**

Find out how to ask about suicide – search: **SAMH How to Ask**



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