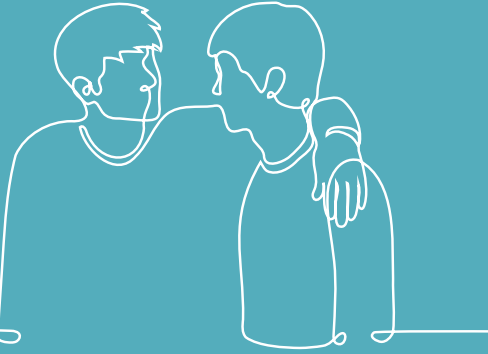


How to help a friend who may be struggling with their mental health



Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in teenagers. We all have daily stressors and life events that can make life feel overwhelming at times. Some friends will be vocal about mental health challenges and/or thoughts of suicide while other friends may share nothing and put on a mask. Paying attention to drastic or subtle changes in behavior, appearance and mood can be the first step in helping a friend who is struggling with their mental health or who is at risk of suicide.

Examples of what your friend may say...

"I just don't want to do this anymore."

"I wish I could just disappear."

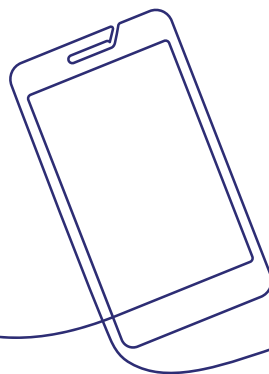
"Sometimes I wonder what it would feel like to just stop existing."

"I don't think I'll be around for much longer anyway."

"Everyone would be better off without me."



Examples of what your friend may be posting on social media...



Posting comments like
"My life sucks." "I hate myself"
"I never do anything right."

Posting dark content (upsetting videos or songs; quotes about death/dying or life being meaningless)

Using hashtags that may be directly or vaguely connected to suicide: #overit #igiveup #notworthit

Using sad or distressed emoticons or emoticons of weapons

You can also keep an eye out for changes in your friend's mood, behaviors and appearance:

- Isolation from friends and family
- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- No longer participating in previously enjoyed activities
- Decrease or no motivation to complete tasks
- Neglecting hygiene (bathing and changing clothes)
- Dramatic weight loss or weight gain
- Increases in drug and alcohol use
- Difficulties coping with everyday stressors
- Feelings of sadness and hopelessness most of the time



Things you can do to help a friend:

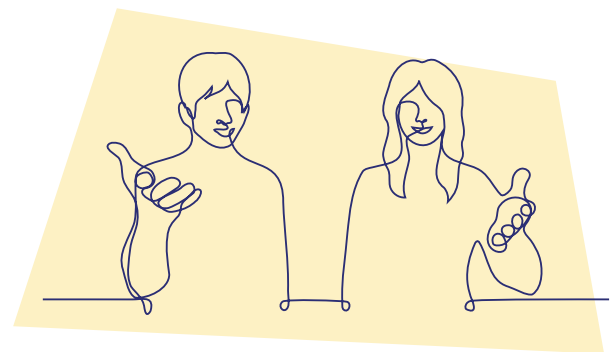
If you believe your friend is in immediate danger to themselves or others, call 911.

If you have concerns about a friend but are unsure what to do or say, you can call or text 988 or text HOME to 741741 to speak with a mental health professional.

Ask your friend if they are having thoughts about suicide.

Be there. Listening without judgment is key to learning about what he or she is thinking and feeling.

Help keep them safe. Asking your friend if they have a plan to kill themselves and, if applicable, making lethal means less available or less deadly can help your friend stay safe when suicidal thoughts arise.



Help them connect. Connect your friend with 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988) and other community resources (24/7 Kids & Teens Helpline: 904.202.7900 or Text LIFE to 741741) to give them a safety net when they need it. You can also help them reach out to other trusted family members, friends, spiritual advisors or mental health professionals.

Follow up. Staying in touch with your friend after they have experienced a crisis or have been discharged from care can make a difference. Studies show that supportive, ongoing contact can play an important role in suicide prevention.