

September is Suicide Prevention Month

How can you help prevent suicide?

Ask

Asking questions like "Are you thinking about suicide?", "How do you hurt?" and "How can I help?" lets the person know that you're open to communicating in a non-judgemental, supportive mindset. Be sure to listen to their responses and take what they say seriously. Listening to both why they're in emotional pain as well as their reasons to stay alive is important, as is helping them focus on their reasons for living.

Be There

Whether it be physically, over the phone, via text message, or any other way, be present for the person at risk. Do not commit to anything that you can't accomplish. You can also help connect the person at risk with others who are willing and able to be there for them. Limiting isolation (short and long-term) and showing that the person is not a burden are both important protective factors against suicide.

Keep Them Safe

Once the lines of non-judgemental communication have been opened, ask questions to determine the individual's immediate safety. Do they have a specific plan, timeline, place, or access to their planned method? This can help determine the immediate actions you need to take to keep them safe. Do not hesitate to call 988 for help.

Help Them Stay Connected

Studies have shown that helping connect an at risk individual to a network of resources and support helps to reduce feelings of hopelessness. 988 or 988lifeline.org are a good place to start, as well as a local mental health professional. Work together with the individual to put a safety plan in place that includes ways to identify if they begin to experience significant feelings or a crisis moments and what they can do/who to contact if it occurs.

Follow Up

After the initial conversation(s) and connections have happened, be sure to follow-up to see how they're doing and if there's anything you can help them with. A simple call, voicemail, text message, e-mail, or even a card in the mail can help re-enforce that you're there to support them unconditionally and increase their feelings of connectedness.

FOR MORE WAYS TO HELP, VISIT WWW.BETHE1TO.COM



If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 988 or visit 988lifeline.org/chat to connect with 24/7 free, confidential, support.