



Missionaries to Ministers and Ministering to Missionaries

Mental Health Safety Kit: Suicide Crisis Intervention

Suicidal thoughts or plans are part of a mental health crisis, not a cry for help or attention (stigma). Knowing the signs, risk factors, how to intervene, and resources available, can help you be a part of the healing journey in someone's life.

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Often talking or writing about death or suicide
- Comments about being hopeless, helpless, worthless, no reason for living
- Increase in alcohol, drug, or pornography use (*Self-medication increases shame and therefore isolation and hopelessness.*)
- Withdrawal from family/friends/community
- Reckless behavior or engaging in risky activities
- Dramatic mood changes (More often at risk during an anxious, agitated or manic episode as they have increased energy, loss of sleep, which can lead to despairing thoughts.)

Risk Factors

- Mental Health Issues (Bipolar Manic Episode, Anxiety, Trauma, Betrayal, Male Depression.)
- Losses and other events (i.e., death, financial or legal struggles, relationship pain, bullying)
- Previous suicide attempts
- History of trauma or abuse (emotional, sexual, physical)
- Having means for suicidal plan in the home
- Chronic physical illness, chronic pain
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others (Stories often have a contagion effect. Do not share plans or how others have followed through.)
- History of suicide in family
- Calm before attempt: getting affairs in order, appearing to feel better, writing goodbye letter

Intervention

Identify the pain and assure them there is a LIFE path to get out of that pain. Hope is on the way. Speak slowly and clearly with empathy. Treat them as you would someone who has suffered a horrendous car accident and is on the side of the road. They need

help as you would if you were in their shoes. If you don't know the person, don't initiate any physical contact or touching.

Ask - I'm concerned, I've noticed - you talk about being tired a lot, or that your marriage is in trouble, or that you are using the phrase hopeless. Listen well, even though their feelings may not be based upon reality, they are still real and consuming to them.

Keep them safe - Are you thinking of suicide? Have you thought of a plan to kill yourself? Research reveals that talking about suicide directly reduces the risk. The trauma, depressed, anxious or manic brain (more often manic or anxious because they have energy) is flooded with distorted thoughts that are not grounded in reality, but all of them are pointed to a need for relief. You letting them know that they are important, valuable, and needed will help them to choose life and not death.

Help connect - Put National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in your phone and in theirs (1-800-273-8255) . Ask if they have a counselor or psychiatrist. If they do have a mental health treatment team, ask if they have been taking their meds and call that Dr.'s office together to let them know how they are doing. There is no confidentiality when it comes to the safety of a life.

Ask, "What is the one thing most important to you and worth living for?" Talk about that as you wait for a parent to join you, as you wait in the ER, as you take them to their therapists office. You may be for them as the angel of the Lord was for Elijah as he feared for his life, practically caring for his needs so that he would have the strength to travel to the Lord. The angel gave touch, water, bread, rest, and encouragement to the prophet in acute stress (I Kings 19).

Stay connected - Studies have shown that the number of suicide deaths go down when there is follow up with the at-risk person. Continue to listen as they get well. Finally, If they have disclosed a plan and they have the specific items in their home/car/on their person, connect with those who can help to remove those items.

Debrief - Processing this afterwards is important. One way is to call the Lifeline yourself (1-800-273-8255) to share your experience and allow their trained ears to listen and care for you. You can do this alone or with others helpers that were with you. It is not easy to walk someone through a suicidal crisis and it is likely not over. Take care of you as you take care of them. Then you will be following Jesus' loving teaching in Mark 12:30-31 that keeps us grounded in Him and sustained in our callings..."loving your neighbor as you love yourself." **Really good job.**



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Resources Available in the USA

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) – Call 800-273-TALK (8255)

If you or someone you know is in crisis—whether they are considering suicide or not—please call the toll-free Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) to speak with a trained crisis counselor 24/7. They are trained in self harm behaviors as well (i.e., cutting).

[Crisis Text Line](#) – Text NAMI to 741-741 24/7

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) – Call 800-799-SAFE (7233)

Trained expert advocates are available 24/7 to provide confidential support to anyone experiencing domestic violence or seeking resources and information. Help is available in Spanish and other languages.

[National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) – Call 800-656-HOPE (4673)

Connect with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area that offers access to a range of free services. Crisis chat support is available at [Online Hotline](#). Free help, 24/7.

Saddleback Church: Rick and Kay Warren have a Mental Health Ministry:

<http://hope4mentalhealth.com>

Downloadable resource guide for individuals and families to help navigate the mental health field.

https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0545/9317/files/Hope_Resource_Guide.pdf?2118848862963175616

**At M2M, Inc. we speak on these issues. One sermon entitled “*Reducing the Stigma of Mental Health by Providing Hope*” may be of help in your church. We are here for you...that none perish.

<https://m2mincnet>

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References:

1. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>. More resources are found on their website.
2. www.psychiatry.org/faith