

What to do if someone is suicidal

It is understandable to feel apprehensive about approaching an employee who you think may be suicidal but if you have concerns, you need to voice them.

How do I know if someone is suicidal?

Warning signs that may indicate a person is suicidal include:

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Looking for ways to kill themselves: seeking access to pills, weapons or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Hopelessness: "I can't see a way out of this"
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family or society
- Anxiety, agitation, inability to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Dramatic changes in mood (including sudden improvement in mood following an episode of depression)
- No reason for living, no sense of purpose in life: "They'd be better off without me"
- Change in appearance
- Taking time off work
- Putting their affairs in order
- Quitting activities that were previously important.



People may show one or many of these signs—and some may show other signs not on the list. If you are concerned someone may be at risk of suicide, you need to approach them and have a conversation about your concerns.

What do I do if I think the person is suicidal?

1 Ask them directly

Asking the question does not increase a person's risk. Although it is understandable to feel panic or shock when someone discloses thoughts of suicide, do your best to appear calm, confident and empathetic in the face of suicide crisis. This may have a reassuring effect for the suicidal person. If the person doesn't want to talk with you, offer to find someone else who they would feel comfortable talking to.

2 Keep them safe for now

Don't leave the person alone, and remove anything they could use to harm themselves. Find out who or what has supported the person in the past and whether these supports are still available. Ask them how they would like to be supported and if there is anything you can do to help.

Ask them if they would like to call a family member, doctor or helpline (see Where to Get Help resource for contacts). Offer to support them during these conversations if they would like you to.

3 Connect them with professional help

Encourage the person to get appropriate professional help as soon as possible. Find out about the resources and services available, provide this information to them and discuss help-seeking options.

If the suicidal person is reluctant to seek help, keep encouraging them and contact a suicide prevention helpline for guidance. If they refuse professional help, call a mental health centre or crisis line and ask for advice.

4 Take care of yourself

Giving assistance and support to a suicidal person is exhausting. It is important to take care of yourself. You may want to talk to a friend or counsellor for support.

Find out who or what has supported the person in the past and whether these supports are still available. Ask them how they would like to be supported and if there is anything you can do to help.

Supporting each other after a colleague's suicide

The suicide of a colleague can have a profound emotional effect in the workplace. It's important for you and your colleagues to support each other.

Make sure all employees know they can ask for help from managers and for counselling through the company. Encourage all employees to check in on themselves and each other.

If someone has **attempted suicide** or you're worried about their **immediate safety**, do the following:

- **Call 111** if they are in immediate physical danger to themselves or others
- Stay with them until support arrives
- Remove any obvious means of suicide they might use (eg, ropes, pills, guns, car keys, knives)
- Try to stay calm and take some deep breaths
- Let them know you care
- Keep them talking: listen and ask questions without judging
- Make sure you are safe.

This is a summary guide only. It is intended to assist with finding the right care for the person and to help them feel supported. It is not conclusive advice. It should be considered alongside individual workplace policies and procedures and, of course, medical and specialist services.