How to talk to someone about suicide

Canadian Mental Health Association Alberta
Mental health for all

centre *for* suicide prevention

1 Pay attention.

Any noticeable change in someone's behaviour is a warning sign that they might not be doing well. This includes:

- Not texting or calling as much
- Drinking or smoking more than usual
- Appearing tired or distant
- Talking about how much life sucks
- Being more irritable or angry

2 Start a conversation.

Create a safe, open, and non-judgmental environment to have a conversation with the person you care about. For example:

- Over the phone
- While driving in the car
- Over food or drinks at a favourite hang out
- While working on a project

Mention what you've noticed; be specific:

"I haven't heard from you much these days. Is everything okay?"



3 Keep the conversation going.

- Ask questions and listen to what the person is saying.
- Resist the urge to offer solutions.
- Validate them. Acknowledge their feelings are valid and let them know that you're there to support them:

"That sounds really hard. But thank you for telling me. Can you tell me more about it? I'm here for you."

4 Stick to your role.

- You're a friend, stranger, family member, co-worker, etc. – not a counsellor.
- Who else have they told? Encourage them to reach out to others.

5 Still worried? Ask directly: "Are you thinking about suicide?"

- If they say yes, **don't panic.**
- Let them know you are there for them and connect them with readily accessible mental health supports.
- Call or text Canada's Suicide Crisis Helpline together at **9-8-8.**
- If they have imminent plans to die, call **911** and ensure they are not left alone.