

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK SOMEONE IS AT RISK OF SUICIDE



● **E**valuate the situation

● **P**rompt communication

● **I**llustrate your concern

Start a ● **C**onversation

Evaluate the situation

There is no definitive way to approach enquiring about suicide since it is different based on the presenting situation.

You could:

- 1) Check whether there is injury and/or how urgently medical treatment is needed.
- 2) Notice the level of emotional/mental distress.
- 3) Is there immediate concern for the person's safety?
- 4) Are there any safeguarding concerns?
- 5) Should you call emergency services straightaway?

illustrate your concern

You can show your concern, your compassion, and that you care by asking about a number of different topics, starting with more general questions and gradually focusing on more direct ones, depending on the individuals answers. This must be done with respect, sympathy, and sensitivity. It may be possible to raise the topic when the person talks about negative feelings or depressive symptoms. It's important not to overreact even if there is a reason for concern. Sharing your concerns with the individual in an empathic manner will help them to feel listened to and allow you to both agree a plan to try and keep them safe.

Prompt communication

Some individuals will introduce the topic without prompting, while others may be too embarrassed to admit that they are having thoughts of suicide. However the topic is raised, careful and sensitive questioning is essential.

You could:

- 1) Ask have they made plans to end their life?
- 2) Have they told anyone about it?
- 3) Have they got any support, i.e., family, friends?

Where practical, and with consent, it's generally a good idea to contact/inform/involve family members, friends, or carers, particularly if the risk is high.

start a Conversation

After assessing the situation and based on the information that you already have in hand, a conversation could be initiated. Sometimes people like to discuss their mood and/or difficulties in life rather than address their suicidal feelings directly. This can be because they feel scared, embarrassed, or even because nobody has wanted to listen to how they feel before.

Try these conversation starters:

- 1) "You seem really down to me. Are you having thoughts about ending your life?"
- 2) "It sounds like you're thinking of suicide. Is that how you feel?"
- 3) "Have you been troubled by thoughts of suicide?"
- 4) "So are you sharing that you want to kill yourself?"