

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A SUICIDAL PERSON

1. Believe him/her. Take seriously what is being said.
2. Use calm, soothing, firm voice. Project self-confidence.
3. Use your listening skills to understand what is bothering him/her and to communicate your support and empathy; do not minimize their feelings. Ask questions in a straightforward and calm manner in an attempt to gain understanding of the situation.
4. Alert others as soon as possible. The Counseling offices should always be alerted. Alert the Dean of Student Services. Contact other outside agencies as directed by Counselors or Dean; if available, otherwise, make contacts yourself.
5. If the person wants to talk and has not taken actions to harm self yet (taken pills, cut self) and is calm, you can talk with them to gather information and provide support prior to making necessary contacts.
6. Talk openly, candidly, and calmly. Asking about suicide WILL NOT INCREASE THE PERSON'S SUICIDAL THOUGHTS. The best approach is to use simple, direct language that tells the student you are not afraid of talking about suicide.
7. Ask, "Are you thinking about suicide?" This gives the person "permission" to talk about the crisis. Ask, "Do you have a plan?" or "Have you thought about how and when you would do it? (The more specific the plan, the higher the risk for carrying it out.) "Do you have the means available to carry out your plan?"
8. Do not act surprised or shocked. This will cause them to withdraw from you.
9. Allow the person to ventilate frightening thoughts. Ventilating and sharing may be the most important part of the process.
10. Never make promises of confidentiality. Do not be sworn to secrecy.
11. Stay with the student if you are concerned about immediate danger. Call for back-up from Counselors, Dean of Student Services, Sheriff Department, Pathways, etc.
12. Consult with Counselors or Dean of Student Services about what you can do to help follow-up with student.
13. Take care of yourself. Eat well, get plenty of sleep, and take advantage of your support system.