Suicide Awareness

If someone you know admits to having suicidal thoughts, what would you say? What would you do? Those are very difficult questions for anyone—even a mental health professional—to face. But as a friend or family member, you should know what to look for and how to respond.

Warning signs common to most suicides:

- Talking about suicide and death
- Threatening or hinting at suicide
- Tidying up his or her affairs: drawing up a will, giving away possessions
- Drastic changes in behavior
- Withdrawing from social interaction
- Sudden neglect in appearance
- Self-mutilation
- Sudden drug or alcohol abuse
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Previous suicide attempts
- Family or peers who have recently attempted or committed suicide

What can you do?

- **Talk to them.** Be direct.
- **Talk honestly and openly about the subject.** If the person appears to be suicidal but hasn't indicated any intentions, ask the question, "Are you having thoughts about suicide?" Let the person know that it is okay to share thoughts and feelings with you. Ask when, where and how he or she plans to commit suicide.
- **Listen.** Refrain from being judgmental. Don't lecture.
- **Acknowledge his or her feelings.** Be empathetic, patient and compassionate.
- **Don't challenge.** Avoid arguments. Instead, concentrate on listening, understanding and getting help.

Here when you need us.

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