

How to Help Your Friend

(Suicide Prevention Protocol)

This resource was created to help students know how to help a friend that said they were thinking about suicide. In fact when asked, most students (90%) shared they wanted a plan to help a friend if they had thoughts about suicide. It is impossible to know if someone will act on these thoughts and so it is important to take action if a friend says something like, "I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up."

Fact: In almost 70% of all suicides the person told someone their intentions at least ONE hour before.
- The Jason Foundation

Things to Consider

1. Do I feel comfortable talking to my friend about this? Does anyone else know my friend feels this way?

YES If you do feel comfortable talking with your friend about this you might:

a. Get more information by asking questions like: How long have you felt like this? What would you do?

NO If you do not feel comfortable talking with your friend about this you might:

a. Tell an adult you trust so they can help your friend.

Fact: Up to 86% of parents whose child completed suicide did not know their child was depressed or suicidal.
- Suicide Among the Young, Rosston, K.

2. What does my friend want and need? Does my friend know about the resources available?

WANT Many times a friend will want:

a. To talk, feel understood and supported

NEED Many times a friend will need:

a. To receive care from a professional

Fact: About 90% of those who complete suicide suffer from at least one major psychiatric disorder.
- Suicide in Montana, Rosston, K.

Know Your Options

1. What resources are available to help my friend?

SUPPORTS Some resources are easy to get:

a. Support from friends, school staff and family can be very meaningful (Talking Tips Below)

b. Telephone crisis lines available 24 hours

PROFESSIONAL CARE Getting professional help requires help from a trusted adult (parent, other family member, teacher, coach, minister, school psychologist, school counselor, secretary, principal):

a. Private professional counselor

b. Mental health center

c. Hospital or doctor

Fact: Research shows that professional care can be very effective. About 86% of teens respond positively to treatment for depression with a combination of antidepressants and counseling.
- Treatment for Adolescents with Depression Study Team

Problem Solving

1. What if my friend refuses to talk to an adult?

PERSUADE Help your friend find a solution they can feel better about:

- a. Offer to go with your friend to talk to a trusted adult
- b. Ask your friend to write a note that you can give to a trusted adult

ACT SOLO

While it might stress the friendship, it is better to help your friend get help through such a painful part of their life:

- a. Talk to your parents or a telephone crisis staff member about your options
- b. Talk to a trusted adult at school
- c. Write a letter to a trusted adult at school

Fact: Common symptoms of depression include limited problem solving, difficulty concentrating and low motivation to take action.

- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (5)

1. What if an adult is told and they do not take any action?

FOLLOW UP Meet with the adult a second time to express your concern:

- a. Ask the trusted adult what they think needs to be done now

MOVE ON

Not all adults know how to respond to this kind of a problem:

- a. Help your friend find and talk to another trusted adult

Fact: Short term improvement for a friend following a suicidal crisis does not mean that the suicide risk is over. Most suicides occur within 3 months following the beginning of "improvement" when the teen has the energy to put their morbid thoughts and feelings into effect.

- Suicide in Montana, Rosston, K.

1. What if a friend posts a message about suicide on social media on the weekend (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)?

SUPPORT Support is great, but it is not always enough help in a situation like this:

- a. Support from friends, school staff and family can be very meaningful (Talking Tips Below)
- b. Remind your friend about the telephone crisis line available 24 hours

RESPONSE

Help for situations like this cannot always wait:

- a. Print or copy the message and tell your parents
- b. Print or copy the message and tell your friend's parents
- c. Call the telephone crisis line to ask for advice
- d. Talk to your friend about going to the emergency room in a hospital to get help
- e. Call the police and ask them to check on your friend

Talking Tips:

- a. Invite your friend to talk about their feelings without judgment
- b. Listen, allow your friend to talk the majority of the conversation
- c. Avoid commenting on the way they tell their story or act
- d. Avoid unkind words which express blame or shame
- e. Communicate caring, acceptance of your friend's feelings (it does not mean that you feel the same way, but that you understand the way that your friend might feel)
- f. Talk about your hope for things getting better in the future
- g. Try to tolerate silence and simply sit with your friend
- h. While it is good to help your friend with some problem solving, try to avoid sharing "quick fixes" for the challenges your friend is going through

Resources in My Community

ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
School Mental Health - CSCT	Your School	School Counselor/Principal
Riverfront Mental Health Center	Hamilton	406-532-9101
Full Circle Counseling Solutions	Stevensville	406-532-1615
Hospitals		
Providence Center/St. Patrick	Missoula	406-327-3034
Community	Missoula	406-728-4100
Marcus Daly	Hamilton	406-375-4800
Police		
Darby Police Department	Darby	406-821-3244 or 911
Hamilton Police Dept.	Hamilton	406-363-2100 or 911
Ravalli County Sheriff	Hamilton	406-363-3033 or 911
Stevensville Police Department	Stevensville	406-777-3011 or 911

24 Hour Crisis Telephone Lines

Montana Suicide Prevention Lifeline	24 Hours	1-800-273-8255
West House Crisis Center	24 Hours	1-406-532-8990
Trevor Lifeline (for LGBTQ)	24 Hours	1-866-488-7386

Private Professional Counselors

Mahr, Sylvia LCSW	Corvallis/Hamilton	406-370-8341
Beck, Coral LCSW	Florence	406-241-1809
Sisson, Aleta MA, LCPC	Florence	406-363-3353
Ruggiero, Debra PhD, LCPC	Stevensville	406-777-3800
Murphy, Marilyn LCPC	Stevensville	406-777-9836
Heckerth, Shawna LCSW, LAC	Hamilton	406-531-5670
Olmsted, Brenda LCSW	Hamilton	406-375-7522
Bishop, Nilda LCPC	Hamilton	406-363-5386
Knell, Jennifer RN, LCPC	Hamilton	406-360-8006
Randazzo, Jessica LCSW	Hamilton	406-370-3483
Laugel, Becky LCPC	Hamilton	406-381-6611
Coleman, Tyler LCPC, LAC	Hamilton	406-396-5910
Lucas, Barb MA, LCPC	Hamilton	406-363-4463
Collins, Melissa LCPC, LAC	Hamilton	406-531-7164
Telfer, Julie LCSW	Hamilton	406-381-2300
Done, Beth MS, LAC	Hamilton	406-375-1717
Mann, Rebecca LCSW	Hamilton	406-880-2352
Van Marle, Robert LCSW, PC	Hamilton	406-363-6900
Erickson, Tonya LCPC	Hamilton	406-369-5268
Widmer, Thad LCSW	Hamilton	406-531-8846
Winters, Hank PhD, LCPC	Hamilton	406-363-3882