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Be the One to Save a Life this Year

What seems to transcend age, gender, socio-economic, and educational levels? Suicide does just that. For every person who dies by suicide annually, there are another 316 people who have thought seriously about suicide, and nearly 60 who have survived a suicide attempt. We all have dark moments but there is hope and we can all help!

September is National Suicide Prevention Month and #BeThe1To is the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline's message for spreading the word about actions we can *all* take to prevent suicide. Together, we can promote healing and prevent suicide by learning to help ourselves, help others, seek consultation from trained providers, and to seek hospital care when necessary. Here are the steps to guide us in helping:

1. **ASK:** Asking the question “Are you thinking about suicide?” communicates that you are open to speaking about suicide in a non-judgmental and supportive way. It is not an easy question, but studies show you do not give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true—bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do. Other questions you can ask include, “How do you hurt?” and “How can I help?”
The flip side of the “Ask” step is to “Listen.” Make sure you take their answers seriously and not ignore them, especially if they indicate they are experiencing thoughts of suicide. Listening to their reasons for being in such emotional pain, as well as listening for any potential reasons they want to continue to stay alive, are both incredibly important when they are telling you what’s going on. Help them focus on **their** reasons for living and avoid trying to impose **your** reasons for them to stay alive.
2. **BE THERE:** This could mean being physically present for someone, speaking with them on the phone when you can, or any other way that shows support for the person at risk. An important aspect of this step is to make sure you follow through with the ways in which you say you will be able to support the person – do not commit to anything you are not willing or able to accomplish. Being there is life-saving because it increases someone’s connectedness to others and limits isolation which is a protective factor against suicide.

1. **KEEP THEM SAFE:** This step is really about showing support for someone during times when they have thoughts of suicide by putting **time** and **distance** between the person and their chosen method. While this is not always easy, asking if the at-risk person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.

A number of studies have indicated that when lethal means are made less available or less deadly, suicide rates by that method decline, and frequently suicide rates overall decline. Research also shows that “method substitution” or choosing an alternate method when the original method is restricted, frequently does not happen. The myth “If someone really wants to kill themselves, they’ll find a way to do it” often does not hold true if appropriate safety measures are put into place.

2. **HELP THEM CONNECT:** Save the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number (**call or text 988**) and chat option (988lifeline.org/chat), to both your phones as it is there to help those who are suicidal or in emotional distress, *including* substance use crisis. People can also utilize 988 if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

Helping someone with thoughts of suicide connect with ongoing support can help them establish a safety net for those moments they find themselves in a crisis. One way to start helping them find ways to connect is to work with them to develop a safety plan. This can include ways for them to identify if they start to experience significant, severe thoughts of suicide along with what to do in those crisis moments. A safety plan can also include a list of individuals to contact when a crisis occurs. Here are ways to make a safety plan: <https://www.bethelto.com/safety-plan/>

3. **Follow Up:** After your initial contact with a person experiencing thoughts of suicide, and after you’ve connected them with the immediate support systems they need, make sure to follow-up with them to see how they’re doing. Leave a message, send a text, or give them a call. The follow-up step is a great time to check in with them to see if there is more you are capable of helping with or if there are things, you have said you would do and have not yet had the chance to get done for the person. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

Information from today’s article came from www.bethelto.com,

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