

## **WHEN YOU HEAR HINTS OF SUICIDAL FEELINGS**

### **What a friend or family member can do:**

- 1) Even though you may feel scared doing this, ask directly if s/he is feeling suicidal.
  - You will NOT be giving her/him any new idea.
  - If s/he has been thinking about suicide, this will give you a chance to work together to help her/him stay safe.
  
- 2) Find out if s/he HAS already done something.
  - If so, do not leave the person alone!
  - Find out if s/he needs medical attention by calling
    - *If in Douglas County Kansas*, Headquarters Counseling Center, 841-2345, or Lawrence Memorial Hospital Emergency Department, 749-6162, or the Poison Center at KU Medical Center 800/332-6633.
    - *If in another area*, one of the two national suicide prevention hotline networks, the National Hopeline Network 1/800/SUICIDE, or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1/800/273-TALK, or your local hospital emergency department.
  - If medical help is needed, a responsible adult needs to help make the arrangements, calling an ambulance if needed, or getting the person to the nearest emergency medical treatment center.
  
- 3) If the person has NOT done anything - find out if s/he has a plan for suicide.
  - If s/he has a plan for suicide, do not leave the person alone!
  - If the suicidal person is a juvenile, or has a significant cognitive or mental health challenge, a responsible adult must be told about the risk of suicide, to help the person stay safe.
  - The more specific and available, the more likely an attempt will happen.
  - If the person is talking about using a firearm and has access to one, a responsible adult needs to remove all firearms and ammunition as soon as possible!
  
- 4) Listen, empathize, and believe the person when s/he talks about her/his thoughts and feelings.
  
- 5) Tell the person that you care about her/him, and that you want her/him to be safe. And that you want to help her/him get the help s/he needs.
  - Repeat this message as often as needed.
  
- 6) Tell the person that other people who care about her/him – other friends and family members – would also want her/him to stay safe. They would want to help.
  - So offer to help her/him let these people know how s/he is doing.
  
- 7) If the person uses any mental health supports – therapist or case manager – let the person know that those helpers need to know how bad s/he's feeling, so that they can help.
  - Again, offer to help her/him let these people know now s/he is doing.

- Be aware that the mental health provider can RECEIVE information from you about your concern. The mental health provider can only SHARE information with you, if there is a release.
- 8) Help the person come up with a plan to be with someone during this crisis time. The people s/he lives with may need to know how s/he is feeling, so they can help.
  - 9) Encourage this person to contact someone with training in helping people who are suicidal – in Douglas County, Kansas, Headquarters Counseling Center; in another area, one of the two national suicide prevention hotline networks, the National Hopeline Network 1/800/SUICIDE, or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1/800/273-TALK, are good places to turn.

### **What NOT to do:**

- 1) Do not refuse to talk about the thoughts of suicide.
- 2) Do not offer "simple answers" or reassurances.
- 3) Do not challenge or use scare tactics.
- 4) Do not be sworn to secrecy.
- 5) Do not involve yourself in therapy - instead, help the person find a trained person to talk with.
- 6) Do what you can to help, but do NOT take responsibility for the person. The only one who has control over whether s/he attempts or dies by suicide, is that person him-/herself. If s/he does attempt or even die by suicide, it is NOT your fault.



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