

Understanding and Helping the Suicidal Person

Here are some ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide:

- Take action. Remove means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and seek support.
- Don't dare him or her to do it. Don't be sworn to secrecy.
- Don't act shocked or judgmental. This will put distance between you.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Get help by calling 911, Bartlett Hospital Emergency Room 796-8427 or Careline 1-877-266-4357

Q: What if the person says they have thoughts of suicide but would not try to kill themselves and do not want to talk to anyone else right now on the phone.

A: Talk to them. Open up communication. Allow suicide to be a topic you will talk about. Contrary to what you may have heard, saying the word "suicide" does not make a person think of suicide. Ask them how long they have thought of suicide. Do they feel that way today? Right now? Have they thought of how they would do the suicide? Ask them if they have thought of when they would do the suicide. Keeping what the suicidal person says secret is not ever helpful! Offer support, but know that you too may likely also need to find your own support. (**resource numbers Careline 1-887-266-4357, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255**)