

# Who Has Told Me They're Suicidal

Disclosing thoughts of suicide is a painful, difficult thing to do. If someone admitted this to you it must mean that they trust you in some way, and are open to help that they believe you can provide.

Regardless of the reason, it's generally a positive sign that someone chose to disclose to you. By telling someone else they are putting a barrier in place preventing them from attempting. They know a third party could potentially intervene by calling emergency services or getting others involved. The act of admitting their thoughts is a gesture and reach toward safety, so it is important to respond with empathy and gratitude:


**Validate:** Tell them that their feelings make sense, that it's okay to feel the way they do. Many people fear this will encourage feelings of suicide, but in fact it encourages communication and connection, which helps *decrease* suicidal thoughts.

**Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Being curious shows they are valuable, that their opinions and perspectives matter. It will also help you understand where they're coming from.

**Paraphrase:** As the person-at-risk is explaining their circumstances, paraphrase to clarify what they're saying. It demonstrates that you're listening intently and will allow them to evaluate if what they're saying is what they want to be saying.

After feeling truly heard and listened to, people-at-risk usually de-escalate. The conversation naturally leads toward discussions of positive things, future plans, **and most importantly: self-care.**

Next, you should check for immediate safety by performing a suicide risk assessment and if possible, have a conversation about what they've been going through to help connect them to safety.



**Important Disclaimer:** This information is meant for educational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice. It is meant to support, not replace, the advice of a licensed health care or mental health care professional. It should not be used to make a diagnosis or replace or overrule a qualified health care provider's judgment.



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