

When a Friend is Talking About Suicide



Time is the crucial thing when dealing with a friend who is having suicidal thoughts. It is important that once you hear your friend talking about these feelings, to recognize them for what they are – a serious threat to his/her life. Don't ignore them and assume the person is just being dramatic. If your friend is talking about killing him or herself, you can't handle it on your own – you MUST tell a trusted adult! It may seem like something you hear all the time, but in this case, we're talking about a life. That should grab your attention and motivate you to tell someone immediately. Don't be foolish and think you can take care of this yourself.

You may be nervous that this person will be upset with you if you tell someone. To be honest, that's a risk you have to take. You have to understand that having this person alive is more important than having them for a friend. You are going to have to risk sacrificing the friendship and get up your courage or else your friend might lose his or her life. This fact may seem scary and daunting, but having that person kill themselves will make that fear seem like a walk in the park. Feeling suicidal is indescribable pain that no one should have to deal with, and the pain of losing someone to suicide is just as bad, trust me. You don't want to look back and wish you had told someone. You will carry that

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regret with you for the rest of your life, so please, do something about it! Tell an adult you trust will know what to do in the situation.

Acting like an adult yourself and asking for help is a big step and can be quite overwhelming and stressful. However, you need to think about this situation in the grand scheme of things – like how will you feel if you keep this information to yourself and your friend dies? This can be difficult to think about, but challenge yourself to think about this very real reality. If you do decide to tell someone, and your friend's distress is caught early enough, then your friend can get help. The point is, the ability of your friend to have the option of living a happy life can ultimately depend on your telling someone. You will be making a proactive and potentially life-saving decision to intervene at the right moment.

I want to remind you, time is of the essence. Maybe your friend will ultimately thank you, maybe not, that really doesn't matter. If you get the slightest inkling that someone might not be okay, do something about it! Don't wait around. And don't try to be a rescuer and take care of it on your own to save the friendship. Act on your instincts, trust your gut, be a grown-up, and tell! It could save the life of someone dear to you.



Written by Christine Henderson, whose personal experience with her mother's suicide, inspired her to become a youth suicide prevention advocate.

Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide

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