



# How to Help Someone Experiencing a Psychological Crisis

## 1. Step 1: Calm Yourself

Humans have mirroring neurons in our brains that sense others' feelings. If you stay calm, they have a better chance of calming down. Take a deep breath. Lower and slow your voice.

## 2. Step 2: Focus on Listening and Providing Empathy

Experiencing connection and validation are key factors in helping someone de-escalating from intense emotional distress. Ask open-ended questions or offer prompts that get them to tell you stories about their experience (e.g., "I would like to understand what you are going through. Please tell me more."). Reflect back feelings you hear.



## 3. Step 3: Ask Directly if They are Thinking About Suicide

Say, "Sometimes when people are going through distress and hardship like you seem to be, sometimes they also think about suicide. Sometimes the thought of not being here feels like a way out of the overwhelming pain they are enduring. I'm wondering, have you had thoughts of suicide, even if they were just fleeting in nature?"

## 4. Step 4: Collaborate on Support Resources

When we are in significant emotional pain, we need a trusted "A-Team" to support us. If suicidal thoughts have been disclosed, take action by contacting a qualified crisis resource who will help you co-create a plan for safety. Offer your on-going partnership and ask, "who else might want to know how much pain you are in?"

## 5. Step 5: Empower Self-Care and Offer Reassurance

Empower the person in crisis by offering them choices throughout the process. Help them remember past instances when they coped with hard times. Offer reassurance that they are doing the right thing by taking steps to feel better.

## 6. Step 6: Establish Plan to Follow Up

Make a commitment to meet up again in the near future to see how things are going. Send them non-demand caring text or voicemail messages such as "I am thinking about you," "You. Got. This.," or "Sending strength."

**Recommended Crisis Resources in the US include the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988 (Text/Chat/Call) and the Crisis Text Line (Text HELLO to 741741).**



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Health Resources.