

Conversations matter

Supporting someone who may be considering suicide



Talking with someone who may be considering suicide can help break down the shame caused by stigma, and let the person feel more supported. It shows that you care, and may help them feel less isolated and scared. It may also allow the person to open up about how you can help them.

Every conversation about suicide may be different. Each person will express their feelings in their own way. There is not just one way to experience a crisis.

The importance of language

Mental health challenges are a *part* of a person's story, but the person is not defined by these experiences. To help overcome the effects of stigma about suicide, it can be helpful to know different words or phrases you can use. These [language guidelines](#) from CAMH may help.

Talking about mental health

Having ongoing open conversations about mental health with people in your life may help them feel more comfortable sharing their feelings. This Game Changers [conversation starter](#) resource provides some tips for talking about mental health.

Asking someone about suicide won't cause or increase suicidal thoughts, or cause the person to act on them.

I'm worried that someone I know may be thinking about suicide

Maybe someone made a comment that stood out to you. Or perhaps you've noticed that they have changed in some way—for example, they are acting more withdrawn, or seem down on themselves. Whatever the reason, it's important to trust your feelings on this.

Ask how the person is feeling, and ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. Try to create a space where they might feel comfortable sharing.

You could say:

I noticed you made a comment earlier about suicide, and it worried me. Have you been thinking about suicide?

If they say *no* or *not any more*, let them know they can talk to you if these feelings do come up. You can also suggest the resources from www.camh.ca/gethelp if they need more support.

Someone has told me they are thinking about suicide

If someone has told you they are thinking about suicide, it's important that they get support from a mental health professional. See the crisis resources at www.camh.ca/gethelp, which include community resources.

If the person has immediate plans to act on these thoughts, they may need in-person emergency care. Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department. Sometimes the person may not want to get help, or might be unable to help themselves. If you are concerned, you should reach out for them.

If you are not sure what to do, you can contact another trusted person to see if they can help.



Taking care of yourself after helping someone in crisis

Helping someone through a crisis can be hard. It may stir up challenging feelings in the moment or in the days that follow.

Doing things to take care of yourself—like journaling or getting some fresh air—may be helpful. There are more tips for taking care of yourself in the Game Changers [self-care](#) resource.

Talking about what happened may make you feel better, but the person you helped probably won't want their experience shared with others. You can still talk about it without mentioning their name or other identifying details.

You may also want to reach out for more support for yourself from a mental health professional. You can go to www.camh.ca/gethelp.

It can be difficult to have these conversations, but taking the first step and reaching out can make a difference in the lives of others.

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Game Changers is a partnership between CAMH and HBC Foundation.

CAMH provides other services for mental health and substance use concerns. For more information, visit www.camh.ca or call 416 535-8501 (or 1 800 463-6273).

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