

WELLNESS TOOLS / SUICIDE PREVENTION

How to Ask About Suicide

If you are worried, asking directly is safer than avoiding the question.

5 MIN

Small enough to use today. Practical enough to use again.

Research reviewed by NIMH shows that asking someone about suicide does not put the idea in their head or increase suicidal thoughts. A direct question can help identify someone who needs support.

Ask plainly

"Are you thinking about suicide?"

"Have you been thinking about killing yourself?"

"Sometimes when people feel this overwhelmed they think about suicide. Is that happening for you?"

Then listen

Stay calm. Let them talk. Do not debate, lecture, shame, dare, act shocked, or promise secrecy.

If they say yes, take it seriously and move toward safety and connection - not an argument about why they should feel differently.

Write it down

The direct question I feel most able to use:

Need support now? Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911.