

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress  
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# 5 Steps to Save a Life

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## Help Prevent Suicide

*(Adapted from the National Institute of Mental Health)*

- **Ask:** “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” It’s not an easy question but studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts.
- **Keep them safe:** Reducing a suicidal person’s access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. While this is not always easy, asking if the person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.
- **Be there:** Listen carefully and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling. Findings suggest acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.
- **Help them connect:** Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline’s number in your phone so it’s there if you need it: Call or text 988. You can also help make a connection with a trusted individual like a family member, friend, spiritual advisor, or mental health professional.
- **Stay connected:** Staying in touch after a crisis or after being discharged from care can make a difference. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.