

How to Help Someone Experiencing Emotional Distress

1 Look for the FACTS:

FEELINGS	Hopelessness, excessive worry, burdensomeness, rejection, worthlessness
ACTIONS	Impulsiveness, self-harm, increased drug or alcohol use, giving away possessions, looking for a way to die such as saving up pills, gaining access to a gun, or searching online
CHANGES	Particularly in the presence of other warning signs; changes in attitude, moods, behaviors, or social connection; sudden change in sleep or eating habits
THREATS	Specific or vague statements or any expression of death or suicide; can be written, spoken, activity on social media, or non-verbal threats
SITUATIONS	Life changes that cause the person to be overwhelmed, unprepared, or triggered, such as personal loss, connection to death, bullying or abuse, failures, or getting in trouble

2 Use Active Listening

DO

Actively listen. Allow them to vent and unload their feelings.

Be sympathetic and non-judgmental. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, even if it is hard to hear.

Offer hope. Reassure them that help is available and suicidal feelings are temporary.

Take them seriously. Ask if they are having thoughts of suicide. You are allowing them to share their pain, not giving them ideas.

DON'T

Argue. Avoid saying phrases like: “You have so much to live for”, “your suicide will hurt your family” or “snap out of it”.

Promise confidentiality or secrecy.

Offer ways to fix problems or give advice.

3 Connect to Help

Call for help immediately in an emergency where there is risk of immediate harm to the person or others. If you are uncomfortable helping it is OK, but you need to tell someone else about your concerns ASAP. You can also connect someone to these resources, through a 3-way call if necessary, when things are escalating and you no longer feel comfortable helping alone.

- **Cornell Health: 607-255-5155 (24/7)**
Phone consultation for Cornell University students
- **Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741741**
Text with trained crisis counselors 24/7
- **Steve Fund Crisis Text Line (esp. for people of color): Text STEVE to 741741**
- **Trevor Project Text Line (esp. for LGBTQ+ people): Text START to 678678**
- **NY Project Hope Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314**
Trained crisis counselors help New Yorkers cope with COVID-19, Hours: 8 AM to 10 PM, 7 days/week

Emergency: 911