



# Protocol for Working with Someone Who is Possibly Having Suicidal Thoughts or Actions

APSS CC 1 – Problem Solving

## Ask

- How?
  - Asking the question “Are you thinking about suicide?” communicates that you are open to having an open discussion about suicide in a non-judgmental and supportive way. Asking in this direct, unbiased manner can open the door for effective dialogue about their emotional pain and can allow everyone involved to see what next steps need to be taken. It shows that you value them as a person, and that you are there for them.

## Keep Them Safe

- How?
  - First off, it is good for everyone to be on the same page. After the “Ask” step, and you have determined that suicide is indeed being considered or talked about, it is important to find out a few things to establish immediate safety.
  - Have they already done anything to try and kill themselves before talking with you?
  - Does the person experiencing thoughts of suicide know how they would kill themselves?
  - Do they have a specific detailed plan?
  - What is the timing of their plan?

## Be There

- How?
  - This could mean being physically present for them, speaking with them on the phones when you can, or any other way that shows support for the person at risk.
  - An important aspect of this step is to make sure you follow through with the ways in which you will be able to support the person.
  - Do not commit to anything that you are not willing or able to accomplish.

## Help Them Connect

- How?
  - Helping someone with thoughts of suicide connect with ongoing support (like The Lifeline, which can be found by dialing 988 on any phone) can help them establish a safety net for those moments they find themselves in a crisis.
  - Additional components of a safety net might be connecting them with support and resources in their local communities, such as counselors. As peer support, connect them with a clinician, or as them if would like to be connected with a clinician. Inquire if they would like you to be present with them when they speak to the clinician.

## Follow Up

- How?
  - After your initial contact with a person experiencing thought of suicide, and after you have connected them with the immediate support systems they need, make sure to follow up with them to see how they are doing.



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- Send a text, call, or visit them. As peer support, you have a unique ability to follow a client when they have been admitted and continue providing peer support services. This consistency is one of the biggest components for a peer support, and for a client.