



# Suicide Prevention TRAINING MANUAL BASIC COURSE

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## Suicide Prevention TRAINING MANUAL

### Welcome!

The purpose of this website and these classes is to help you learn how to ask, "are you ok?" to people that you care about. It will help give you the confidence to begin conversations with someone who needs help...someone who is struggling with life.

We provide training to students, organizations, departments, churches and programs. It can be online, at your place or at one of ours.

### **By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:**

- Understand and identify situations where people may not feel ok
- Identify the signs that people may not be ok
- Identify the appropriate times to ask, "are you ok?"

Today, many people need real-life help during tough circumstance. Whether you are a parent or student...or just someone who has a friend needing help, you can be a **Lifeguard** for them. As a caring and compassionate relative or friend, you will be able to communicate with them and perhaps help save their life! You will be able to spot the danger signs, realize when someone is in need, and go into action. Refer the person in need to a trained counselor or professional. Become a **Lifeguard**!

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**Mobile Friendly Website**  
<https://www.ruok.help/training>

## **Lesson 1 - Recognizing the Signs**

***It can be scary when a friend or loved one is thinking about suicide.***

### **Here are some warning signs:**

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling “trapped” or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

### **Be Aware of Feelings**

Many people, at some time in their lives, think about suicide. Most decide to live because they eventually come to realize that the crisis is temporary and death is permanent. On the other hand, people having a crisis sometimes perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel an utter loss of control.

### **Here are some of the feelings and thoughts they experience:**

- Can't stop the pain
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Can't think clearly
- Can't see any way out
- Can't sleep, eat or work
- Can't get out of depression
- Can't make the sadness go away
- Can't see a future without pain
- Can't see themselves as worthwhile
- Can't get someone's attention
- Can't seem to get control

***If someone you know exhibits these symptoms, offer help!***

## Lesson 2 - How to Ask, "R U OK?"

Connection is good for us all, so reach out to someone you care about and ask them, "Are you OK?" You don't have to be an expert to support someone who is going through a tough time. You just need to listen to their concerns without judgment and take the time to follow up with them.

**Here are some simple steps to start and follow through with a conversation.**

### 1. Ask them, "Are you OK?"

- Start a general conversation, preferably at a private location.
- Build their trust through good eye contact, and open and relaxed body language.
- Ask open-ended questions, such as:

*"What's been happening? How are you doing?"*

*"I've noticed that... What's going on with you at the moment?"*

*"You don't seem like yourself, and I'm wondering if you are OK?"*

*"Is there anything that's causing you to feel this way?"*

### 2. Listen without judgment

- Guide the conversation with caring questions...giving them time to reply.
- Don't rush to "solve" problems for them.
- Help them understand that solutions are available when they're ready to explore options.

*"How has that made you feel?"*

*"How long have you felt this way?"*

*"What do you think caused you to react in this way?"*

### 3. Encourage action

- Summarize the issues and ask them what they plan to do.
- Encourage them to take one first step, such as see their doctor.

*"What do you think might help your situation?"*

*"Have you considered making an appointment with your doctor?"*

*"Would you like me to make an appointment or come with you?"*

### 4. Follow up

- Put a note in your diary to call them in one week. If they're desperate, follow up sooner.
- Ask if they've managed to take that first step and see someone.
- If they didn't find this experience helpful, urge them to try a different professional; and let them know that there's someone out there who can help them.

*"How are things going? Did you speak with your doctor?"*

*"What did they suggest? What did you think of their advice?"*

*"You've had a busy time. Would you like me to make the appointment?"*

### 5. Dealing with denial?

- If they deny the problem, don't criticize them; acknowledge that they're not ready to talk.
- Tell them you're still concerned about changes in their behavior and let them know that you care about them.
- If they don't feel things are better after your conversation, ask if you can speak with them again the following week.

- Avoid a confrontation unless it's necessary to prevent them from hurting themselves or hurting someone else.

*"It's OK if you don't want to discuss it right now, but call me when you're ready to talk."*

*"Can we meet next week for a chat?"*

*"Is there someone else you'd rather discuss this with?"*

## **6. What if you think the person is actually considering suicide?**

If you're worried that someone you know is having a tough time or having suicidal thoughts, it's important that you give them an opportunity to talk about it. Find a quiet, private space to ask them how they're feeling and whether they've had any thoughts about suicide. Speak in a calm, confident and non-judgmental manner to help them feel supported and reassured.

If someone says they're thinking about suicide, it's important that you take it seriously. Tell the person that you care about them and you want to help. Don't become agitated, angry or upset. Explain that thoughts of suicide are common but don't have to be carried out.

It's also essential that you determine whether they've already formulated a plan to take their life. Try to find out if they've decided how they'll kill themselves or if they've begun to take steps to end their life. If you find that they have, it's critical you do NOT leave them alone and do NOT use guilt or threats to prevent suicide. Even if someone says they haven't made a plan for suicide, you still need to take it seriously. Lack of a plan does NOT guarantee their safety. Get immediate professional help or call an emergency help line, such as Lifeline at (800) 273-8255.

People who are thinking about suicide may signal their suicidal intentions to others. In other cases, there may be no warning at all. It's therefore critical that you regularly engage with family, friends and colleagues and provide them with the attention and time to ask them how they're doing.

## **7. What if I can't speak to them face-to-face?**

- Use the same steps above and talk to them by phone.
- Avoid calling from a noisy place or while traveling.
- If they're in a rush, make a time to call them back.
- Remember that they can't see your face, so it's important to verbally indicate your support.

*"I wanted to call you and talk a little about how you're doing. Is now a good time?"*

*"It sounds like you're busy or in a rush. When is a good time to call you back and talk for a few minutes?"*

This information is from Australia's R U OK? Foundation. Website: [www.ruokday.com](http://www.ruokday.com)  
Also, view this helpful video: <https://youtu.be/6CICU3LwAVs>

## Lesson 3 - Dealing with Depression

Depression drains your energy, hope, and drive, making it difficult to do what you need to feel better. But while overcoming depression isn't quick or easy, it's far from impossible. You can't just will yourself to "snap out of it," but you do have more control than you realize — even if your depression is severe and stubbornly persistent. The key is to start small and build from there. Feeling better takes time, but you can get there if you make positive choices each day.

Be patient with yourself and celebrate each and every accomplishment. The steps may seem small, but they'll quickly add up. If you continue to take positive steps day by day, you'll soon find yourself feeling better.

### 5 tips for dealing with depression

1. Stay connected
2. Get moving
3. Do things that make you feel good
4. Eat a healthy, mood-boosting diet
5. Challenge negative thinking

When you're depressed, the tendency is to withdraw and isolate. Even reaching out to close family members and friends can be tough. Compound that with the feelings of shame and the guilt you may feel at neglecting your relationships.

But social support is essential to depression recovery. Staying connected to other people and the outside world will make a world of difference in your mood and outlook. And if you don't feel that you have anyone to turn to, it's never too late to build new friendships and improve your support network.

### Look for support from people who make you feel safe and cared for.

The person you talk to doesn't have to "fix" you, they just need to be a good listener — someone who'll listen attentively and compassionately, without being distracted or judging you.

### Make face-time a priority.

Phone calls, social media, and texting are great ways to stay in touch, but they don't replace good old-fashioned in-person quality time. The simple act of talking to someone face to face about how you feel can play a big role in lifting the fog of depression and keeping it away.

### Try to keep up with social activities, even if you don't feel like it.

When you're depressed, it often feels more comfortable to retreat into your shell, but being around other people will make you feel less depressed.

### Find ways to support others.

It's nice to receive support, but research shows you get an even bigger mood boost from providing support yourself. So, find ways, both big and small, to help others: volunteer, be a listening ear for a friend, do something nice for someone.

### Depression can lead to suicidal thoughts.

Many people, at some time in their life, think about suicide. Most decide against it because they eventually come to realize that the crisis is temporary and death is permanent. On the other hand, people having a crisis sometimes perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel an utter loss of control.

The best way to prevent suicide is to be aware of the common warning signs. Be aware of the first indications of trouble and begin thinking about getting help.

**Here are some signs:**

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless
- Talking about feeling trapped or in pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Giving away treasured personal possessions

## FINDING HELP

If you are experiencing some of these warning signs, here's what you should do:

- Contact your doctor
- Visit your minister
- Go to your school counselor
- Call a suicide prevention hotline



No matter what problems your friend or family member is dealing with, **Lifeline** wants to help them find a reason to keep living. By calling (800) 273-8255, you'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor at a crisis center in your area, anytime, 24/7. If you think that the friend or family member is in a crisis, please call the **Lifeline**. They will be able to help you get information about substance abuse, economic worries, relationship and family problems, sexual orientation, illness, getting over abuse, depression, mental and physical illness, and even loneliness.



**The Veterans Crisis Line** connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call (800) 273-8255 and Press 1.



**The Trevor Project** is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. If you are a young person who is in crisis, or feeling suicidal, or simply in need of a safe and judgment-free place to talk, call **The Trevor Lifeline** at (866) 488-7386.

## CRISIS TEXT LINE |

Text HELLO to 741741

Free, 24/7, Confidential

**Crisis Text Line** is an organization that provides free crisis intervention via SMS message. The organization's services are available 24 hours a day every day, throughout the US by texting **741741**.



**Community Mental Health** seeks to provide help for those who may be dealing with ongoing conditions, particularly during challenging times, including crisis. Service information and crisis services and supports are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **To receive services, call (734) 544-3050.**



**Ozone House offers 24-hour support and resources for youth, and those who care about youth, anytime – day or night. Just call (734) 662-2222.** Crisis Line counselors will help you get access to food and shelter, or direct you to a safe place to hang out.



**The Corner Health** team of Board-certified doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, nutritionists and health educators are experts in providing care to teens and young adults. They will partner with you to meet your needs. Whether you need a physical exam for sports, birth control, or counseling, the Corner is here for you! Call **(734) 484-3600**.



Family Crisis Center of Washtenaw

**Family Crisis Center** helps individuals and families experiencing a life crisis such as grief/loss, suicide prevention, domestic violence, sexual assault and anger management. Call **(734) 660-7059**.



**RU?OK** is a suicide awareness and prevention mobile-friendly website that offers help and resources for anyone contemplating suicide ([www.ruok.help](http://www.ruok.help)).

Credits:

[www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org) & [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Contact:

[ruokmichigan@gmail.com](mailto:ruokmichigan@gmail.com)

## Lesson 4 - Parent's Toolkit

### Why do I need to watch for suicide?

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for those ages 15 to 24 in the U.S.
- For each suicide death, family and close friends are at higher risk for suicide themselves.
- If you are concerned, don't wait to talk to your child.
- Knowing the risk factors and warning signs helps you help your child with concerns about himself or another student.
- Asking directly about suicide tells your child it's ok to talk about it with you.
- Take all suicidal thoughts, threats and behaviors seriously.
- Most suicidal people want to end severe emotional pain.
- Emotional pain makes it hard to think clearly, consider options or remember reasons for living.

### Risk factors

#### ***Prior suicide attempt***

- This is the strongest predictor of future attempts.

#### ***Mental illness***

- 1 in 5 teens will have depression at some point.
- Many teens with depression are undiagnosed.
- Childhood depression often continues into adulthood, especially if left untreated.

#### ***Interpersonal conflict***

- **Bullying:** In-person or cyberbullying.
- **Trauma:** Examples include injury, assault, legal trouble, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
- **Relationship breakups:** Impulsivity combined with a personal inability to think through consequences before acting can increase the risk for suicide following a breakup.
- **Sexting:** Tell your children to never take images they don't want classmates, family or future employers to see. Forwarding a sexual picture of a minor is a crime.
- **Recent loss:** Examples include moving, changing schools, divorce, or death of a loved one.
- **Questioning sexual orientation.**

### Warning signs

#### ***Call 911 if:***

- A suicide attempt has been made.
- A weapon is present.
- The person is out of control.
- The person makes a serious threat to kill himself or herself such as:
  - "I wish I were dead."
  - "If ..... doesn't happen, I'll kill myself."
  - "What's the point of living?"
- Looks for a way to carry out a suicide plan.
- Talks about death or suicide in text messages, on social media sites or in poems/music.
- Gives away possessions.
- Hopelessness.
- Rage, anger or seeking revenge.
- Reckless or risky behavior.
- Expressions of feeling trapped, like there's no way out.
- Alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawal from family or friends.
- Anxiety, agitation or sleep irregularity.
- Dramatic mood changes.
- Discussions of no reason for living or no sense of purpose.

### Prevention

**What you can do right now:**

- Know suicide risk factors and warning signs.
- Share this website with your child.
- Have a conversation about what your child should do if he is concerned about himself or a friend.
- Promote skills in problem-solving and conflict resolution.
- Maintain a supportive and involved relationship with your child.
- Encourage participation in sports, activities at school/place of worship or volunteering.
- Help your teen develop strong communication skills.
- Get medical care for depression and substance use.
- Don't leave a depressed or suicidal teen home alone.
- Most suicides occur in the early afternoon/evening in the teen's home.

**Remove these items or secure in your home:****Prescription and over-the-counter medications**

- Keep medications, including vitamins with iron, where your kids or their friends cannot access them.
- Don't keep lethal doses of medication on hand. A pharmacist can advise you on safe quantities.

**Alcohol and drugs**

- Talk to your kids about substance use as a major risk factor for suicide.
- If your teen has a pattern of substance use, seek mental health care. Substance use could be an attempt to self-medicate a mental illness.
- Substance use makes youth more likely to choose lethal means, such as guns. Remove firearms from your home.

**Poisons**

- Lock up potentially harmful common household products, including household cleaners, products containing alcohol (such as mouthwash, hand sanitizer, etc.), and cosmetics (such as nail polish remover, perfume, etc.).

**Guns**

- Remove firearms from your home. More than half of all suicide deaths result from a gunshot wound.

**Talking to your kids****How to start a conversation after a relationship breakup:**

- What did you notice about yourself in the relationship?
- What is positive? What would you like to change?
- Were there patterns or issues that brought you into this relationship or caused it to end?
- What are your priorities and preferences in life?
- Who are you on your own and how do you want to live your life?

**How to start a conversation about suicide:**

- "I have been feeling concerned about you lately."
- "Lately, I've noticed some differences in you. How are you doing?"
- "What happened? It might help to talk about it."

**Questions you can ask:**

- "When did you begin feeling like this?"
- "Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?"
- "How can I support you right now?"
- "Could you tell me more about that?"

**What to say that can help:**

- "You are not alone – I'm here for you."
- "I may not understand exactly how you feel, but I love you and want to help."
- "I think you feel there is no way out. Let's talk about some options."

Reference:  
[www.oakgov.com/health/information/Pages/Youth-Suicide-Toolkit.aspx](http://www.oakgov.com/health/information/Pages/Youth-Suicide-Toolkit.aspx)

## Credits & References

Below is a list of some of the organizations/sources providing the material in these lessons. Please visit their websites for more information.

- **SAMHSA** ([www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov))
- **Suicide Prevention Lifeline** ([www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org))
- **Web MD** ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com))
- **R U OK? Australia** ([www.ruok.org.au](http://www.ruok.org.au))
- **The Trevor Project** ([www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org))
- **Veterans Crisis Line** ([www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net))
- **Center for Disease Control & Prevention** ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))
- **Stop Bullying** ([www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov))
- **NAMI** ([www.namimi.org](http://www.namimi.org))
- **Living Works** ([www.livingworks.net](http://www.livingworks.net))
- **Ohio State University** ([www.suicideprevention.osu.edu](http://www.suicideprevention.osu.edu))
- **MedicineNet** ([www.medicinenet.com](http://www.medicinenet.com))
- **Psychology Today** ([www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com))
- **Help Guide** ([www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org))
- **Mayo Clinic** ([www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org))
- **Oakland County Health** ([www.oakgov.com/health](http://www.oakgov.com/health))

# Get Help

