



**Redeemer**  
COUNSELING

# Suicide Prevention Month: Creating a Safety Plan

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If you suspect someone is having suicidal thoughts, you should ask that person directly to find out if it's true. Many people are afraid to ask and talk about suicide, because they're afraid that it will give that person ideas or trigger suicidal thoughts. This isn't true. Those who struggle with suicidal ideation often cry out for help in subtle ways and might be relieved to share what they're going through. So, if you're concerned someone might hurt him or herself, here are some questions you can ask:

1. In the past few weeks, have you wished you were dead or been thinking about killing yourself? If the person answers yes to the first question, then continue asking:
2. Have you thought about how you would kill yourself?
3. Do you have the means to carry out your ideas about how you want to kill yourself?
4. Have you thought about when you would kill yourself?

### **Identifying someone who is actively suicidal and what to do**

If the person states that he or she has a plan, the means to carry out the plan and has decided a time to commit suicide, or refuses to answer, then that person is actively suicidal. At that point, the person needs a full mental health evaluation and you should not leave that person alone until cleared by a professional. Keep the person in sight. Ask someone to transport you to the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) or call 911 immediately.

### **Helping someone who has suicidal thoughts, but is not actively suicidal**

If a person has no plan of when or how they would kill themselves, but still has suicidal thoughts at times, then this is called passive ideation. In that case, the person doesn't need an immediate full psychiatric evaluation, but you should recommend that person connect to a professional counselor. In the meantime, you can create a Safety Plan with the person until he or she gets professional help.

*See page 3 for Creating a Safety Plan.*

# Safety Plan

A Safety Plan fosters honest conversation with someone who has passive suicidal ideation to enhance their coping skills and commitment to treatment. First, ask if the person is willing to make a safety contract with you. If the person agrees, then walk with them through a safety plan. The one below can be used with pen and paper. “Suicide Safety Plan” is an Android/IOS app that coaches you through each step. The Stanley-Brown Safety Plan is an app available for IOS devices only. If you are using an app, have the person download it on their phone and fill it out so that it will be accessible to them.

- 1. Be aware of your warning signs.** What are some feelings, images, thoughts, situations, and behaviors that indicate to you that a crisis may be developing? Write them down in your own words.
- 2. Use your own coping strategies.** List some things you can do on your own so that you will not act on urges to harm or kill yourself. Some examples include listening to calming music, taking a walk, and exercising.
- 3. Be in social situations or interactions that distract you from the crisis.** List people and social settings that may help take your mind off of the suicidal ideation. Can this be sitting in a coffee shop? Being in the park or any other public place?
- 4. Reach out to family members or friends with whom you feel safe talking about your suicidal thoughts.** List the names and numbers of 2-3 people who you believe can be understanding, who you can talk to when you have suicidal thoughts.
- 5. Contact mental health professionals or agencies.** Make a list of names, numbers and/or locations of clinicians, local emergency rooms, and crisis hotlines and save them on your phone.
  - Call 988 Text 988 Chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)
  - Chat online at <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/> – for NYC
  - 24/7 Crisis Text Line: text “HOME” to 741741 – free, confidential, & 24/7; English and Spanish
- 6. Make your environment safe.** What are ways in which you might harm yourself? What are ways you can make the method less accessible?

Once you have helped create the safety plan, follow up with the person to see if they connected with a counselor. Continue to be there for support. Redeemer Counseling offers organizational training on suicide prevention and how to respond if someone dies by suicide within your ministry, church, or organization. [Learn more.](#)