



#SuicidePreventionWeek2020

Hope, Resilience & Recovery



Funded by counties through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63)

suicideispreventable.org

Supporting Someone While They Find Their Reasons for Living During COVID-19

There are people fighting a very personal battle in the midst of the collective dangers of this unprecedented pandemic – people who are questioning whether to continue to live through the emotional pain they are experiencing. Some people who were “on the fence” – ambivalent about life versus death before – may find hope and resolve to live, motivated by the fear of having the choice to live or die taken away. Others’ pain may increase, fueled by fear, isolation, anxiety, and loss.

What can be done?

First, let’s help to prevent ourselves and our loved ones from developing thoughts of suicide in the first place. Ensure that you are staying connected to your loved ones by reaching out, checking in regularly, and offering support as needed. We must also be present and patient with ourselves, asking for what we need to stay hopeful and feel connected. (Take a look at one of our [recent blogs](#) for suggestions and resources.)

How can we tell if someone is having thoughts of suicide?

Although our face to face interactions may be limited it is more important than ever to be vigilant for those around us to **know the signs**. Staying connected with regular check-ins is essential so we can recognize the warning signs. If you are worried that someone is having thoughts of suicide, the next step is to **find the words** and **reach out**. It’s important to talk openly about suicide, and to ask directly: “Are you having thoughts of suicide?” or “Are you having thoughts of ending your life?” The website SuicideIsPreventable.org offers information about how to [Know the Signs, Find the Words and Reach Out](#).

What can we do once we know someone is having thoughts of suicide?

Each of us can support someone while *they* find their reasons for living by sharing hope and letting them know they are not alone. Our role is less about “fixing the problem” or convincing them to stay, and more about being present and listening as they search for their own reasons for living. There are resources to help such as the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (800.273.8255), or a crisis service that might be more approachable to them such as the [Crisis Text Line](#), [Trevor Lifeline](#), [Coplifeline](#). The network of crisis centers that make up the [Lifeline](#) are functioning and here to help. If the person is in your household, offer to call with them or for them. If they live outside your home, consider offering to call the crisis resource with them, using a three-way call option. Crisis services such as the *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* can help you identify strategies to help keep them or yourself safe.

However, for some the suggestion to contact a crisis resource may not resonate, might feel dismissive, or could just feel inadequate. We can help others in these moments by talking openly and honestly about suicide. It's important to remember that people who are thinking about suicide often don't want to die, they just don't want to go on living with the pain. If that's the case, we need to talk about the pain.

Imagine your friend came to you with pain in their stomach. What questions would you ask? "How bad is the pain on a scale of 1-10," "How long have you been experiencing this pain," "Describe the pain to me," or "Is there anything that helps to reduce the pain, even a little bit." Now, imagine your friend came to you with an emotional pain so severe that it was leading to thoughts of suicide.

It is natural to fear saying the wrong thing or doing the wrong thing when it comes to suicide and so sometimes, we choose to do nothing. But if someone is thinking about suicide, we need to be willing to talk about suicide and to listen. Whether that's via phone, text, or video chat, technology can be useful to help us stay connected and offer support.

For some, that might not be enough. Your instinct might be telling you to explore ways to talk, sit or pray together, but you are not sure how to do this while also respecting physical distancing guidelines. If you are deeply concerned and feel you need to check on your loved one in-person, contact the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** and talk through options with a trained counselor. Describe the situation and ask them to help you assess your options and weigh the risks of a law enforcement response or an in-person visit, to both you and the person at-risk. Whatever you choose to do, applying physical distancing and taking safety precautions for you and the person at risk for suicide is vital to keep everyone safe.

As a result of COVID-19 we have entered uncharted territory. We have to trust our instincts and common sense to keep our loved ones safe. When does it become essential (and the safest option) to provide direct care for an older adult, go to the Emergency Room, or offer comfort to a person in a suicidal crisis? There are no easy answers, but we must remember we are not alone.

You are not alone. If you are thinking about suicide or are concerned about someone else, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255)**. Skilled and trained counselors are available 24/7 to talk, answer questions, and help you navigate this challenging situation. You are not alone, and help is a phone call or chat away.

COVID-19 General Resources:

- SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Line: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
- [Crisis Text Line](#): text EMM to 741-741
- [National Helpline](#) (substance abuse and mental health): call 1-800-662-4357
- Teen Line: text "TEEN" to 839863 between 6:00pm-9:00pm PST for teen-to-teen education and support.
- The Peer-Run Warm Line: 855-845-7415 for peer-run non-emergency emotional support.
- Older Californians can stay connected with their communities during isolation, and receive help accessing food or medical supplies by calling 833-544-2374