



C.A.R.E.: A Resource For Those Who Receive Calls At Work From Someone In Distress Talking About Suicide.

Understanding Suicide

Every expression of suicide needs to be taken seriously because no one can predict who will die by suicide (ref) even though most people have had thoughts of suicide at some point in their lives. There is no single cause for suicide. When a person feels helpless and/or alone, overwhelmed by pain, fear and suffering, hope wanes. Anyone can be at risk for suicide.

What Can I Do?

The most effective intervention you can do when you get a call at work is to be non-judgmental, let the person know you are hearing them, understanding their distress as best you can, believing them and linking them to appropriate resources. These guidelines are not intended to suggest that this process requires a lengthy conversation. Sometimes sensitive referrals can be made within ten minutes. What is important is that the conversation is based on active listening and grounded in **CARE**. Sometimes just a few genuine words of concern and understanding can make a big difference and help get a person through to the best person to help them. You can't take away their pain or solve their problems. You can **C.A.R.E.**

C.A.R.E.

C- Calm and Connect: "I'm here, talk to me."

Stay calm. Take your time. Breathe. It is not your job to fix the problem. Your calmness will help the caller feel calmer. Genuine compassion, a willingness to listen and being present with them in their suffering without getting caught in their strong emotions are key to making a connection. Tell them you will do the best you can with what you know. (e.g. "I'd like to help and remember, I'm not a trained professional in these matters, so let's see what we can do right now because you sound pretty upset.")

A - Active Listening and Assessment: "I want to hear you"

Listen for the facts (what the person is saying) and emotions (how they are feeling). Reflect back that you have understood both by reflecting back or paraphrasing what the person has said. Ask questions to ensure you are understanding them correctly. Listening includes listening to the silence, you don't have to jump in.

Ask: Are you thinking of ending your life?

Ask: How are you thinking of doing this?

Ask: Do you have the means to end your life? Having thoughts, intent, plans, and means increases the person's risk dramatically. Try to Get their phone number and address in order to get help to them. Ask a co-worker to help and support you by calling 911 or consulting with police while you are on the phone with the person.

R- Referral: "Help is Available"

As the conversation progresses, the connection between you and the caller will become stronger. Validate their efforts to seek support and build on them. Ask whom they've contacted for help, who they might connect with for support and suggest they contact a counsellor, mental health professional, crisis centre, spiritual care provider, elder or their local crisis/distress line. Know the phone number for your local distress/crisis line. Crisis/distress lines are almost always listed in the front of telephone books or can be found by visiting www.suicideprevention.ca. Remind them of your limits and your sincere desire that they get professional help. (e.g. "I know how distressed you are and what a difficult time this is for you. I'm concerned about your safety and well being and want to help you get what you need to get through this. There are people who can help and I'd like to help you connect with those people. Can you tell me where you are calling from so that I can give you information about those resources nearest you?" phone numbers and hope you will call them. Will you call them?)

E – Empathy

Just "being there" is often enough for the time being. When someone knows that another person has made an effort to listen and understand their feelings they can feel less alone, less frightened and a little more hopeful. There is nothing as powerful as a meaningful connection with another person.

Training: Training such as SAFETALK and ASIST are also invaluable trainings for people who are in positions where they are more apt to be in contact with people in distress. For more information on SAFETALK and ASIST visit www.livingworks.net . Sometimes local distress/crisis centres can prepare workshops for call takers on dealing with suicidal callers.

To learn more about suicide prevention visit www.suicideprevention.ca .