

RECOGNISE THE SIGNS

Look for changes in behaviour or phrases like:

- "I feel like there's no way out."
- "I don't matter anymore."
- Talking about death or wanting to end their life.
- Withdrawal from social interactions, mood swings, or using substances more frequently.

These signs suggest that the person may need support and an open conversation.

Supporting Someone in Emotional Distress

GUIDE APPROACH

GREET

Approach them with warmth and calmly let them know you're there to listen. Saying, "I'm here for you" can help them feel understood and safe.

UNDERSTAND

Listen without interrupting or offering solutions too soon. Allow them to share their feelings while you show empathy and care.

INFORM

Reassure them that support is available. Gently say, "We can find someone to help," to remind them they're not alone in this.

DIRECT

If they're open, assist them in contacting a mental health professional or helpline. Stay with them if it helps. If they mention specific plans, take immediate action.

ENCOURAGE

Reinforce that seeking help is a positive step. Remind them, "It's okay to ask for support." Suggest small self-care activities they may enjoy.

BEYOND BLUE - CALL 1300 22 4636 - CHAT ONLINE BEYONDBLUE.ORG.AU

LIFELINE - CALL 13 11 14 - CHAT ONLINE AT LIFELINE.ORG.AU

ASKING QUESTIONS

Use open questions to invite them to share more:

- "What's been going on for you?"
- "How can I support you right now?"

For more immediate safety concerns, ask direct questions:

- "Are you thinking about ending your life?" or
- "Do you have a plan?"

Asking these questions calmly can open the door for them to share more and guide you on how best to help.

SAFETY PLAN

If the person has mentioned suicidal thoughts, you can help them create a safety plan to ensure their immediate safety:

- **Focus on what they should do, not what they shouldn't:** Help them outline actions they can take when they feel unsafe (e.g., calling a helpline, reaching out to a trusted person).
- **Be clear:** The plan should specify who they can call and what steps to take in moments of crisis.
- **Short-term goals:** Keep the plan simple and for a manageable period, so they feel they can meet those goals and have a sense of achievement.

Include contact numbers for helplines, friends, or professionals they can call if they're feeling suicidal.

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

- 1** Be a calm, steady presence. Your support may help reduce their distress.
- 2** Focus on listening rather than giving advice. Showing empathy is often more helpful in the moment.
- 3** Encourage them to reach out for professional help while respecting their space.

