

You Are a Suicide Advisor: Where Do You Start?

Being the first person someone confides in about suicidal thoughts is a serious responsibility—but you don't need to be a therapist to make a difference. You just need to be present, compassionate, and informed. This guide gives you practical steps to take as a suicide advisor—whether you're a friend, coworker, mentor, or concerned peer.

Step 1: Stay Calm, Stay Present

When someone opens up to you, your calm response can be grounding. Don't panic, judge, or try to 'fix' things immediately. Use active listening: make eye contact, use affirming language, and validate their pain.

Step 2: Ask Direct, Caring Questions

Asking about suicide does NOT plant the idea—it gives permission to speak honestly.

Say things like: 'Are you thinking about ending your life?' or 'Have you thought about how or when?'

If they say yes, stay with them and go to the next step.

Step 3: Don't Promise Secrecy

Your responsibility is to help them stay alive. If someone is in danger, you must get professional help—even if it breaks their trust short-term.

Step 4: Connect Them to Help

Call 988, guide them to a mental health professional, or help them make a safety plan. Offer to go with them to an appointment or call a trusted adult if they're a minor.

Step 5: Follow Up

After the crisis moment, check in. Continue being a steady presence. Ask: 'How are you today?' 'What's helping you cope this week?'

Consistency saves lives.

Additional Tips for Suicide Advisors

- Know your local resources (crisis lines, walk-in clinics, campus counselors).
- Use 'I' language: 'I care about you. I want you to be safe.'
- Don't try to do it alone—bring in others when necessary.
- Take care of yourself. Supporting someone else can take a toll.