



**DISCHARGED**  
An Alternatives to Suicide Approach

# How to support someone who is suicidal

It can be hard to know what to do when someone tells you they are thinking about dying. You might be worried about saying the wrong thing or wondering if you should just take them to the hospital. Often, we hear from people that they really just need someone to listen and hear how much they are hurting.

Reaching out for help is hard. If someone tells you they are at their wits end and thinking about death, don't brush them off – **stay in the dialogue.**

## Ask questions about:

### - **why do they want to end their life?**

They could be dealing with loneliness, financial stress, domestic violence, etc.

### - **why don't they want to end their life?**

Maybe they are holding on for an upcoming holiday, their family or pets, etc.

Here's some more tips to use in a conversation with someone who is suicidal.

## **VALIDATE THEIR EXPERIENCE**

- "That sounds really hard..."
- "I can see why you feel that way..."
- "It makes sense you are angry..."
- "I'd feel hurt if that happened to me, too."
- "It must be incredibly difficult to live in those circumstances"
- "Thanks so much for sharing that experience"

## **BE CURIOUS about what's going on for them.**

- "How long have you felt this way?"
- "What's going on?"
- "What gives your life meaning?"
- "What makes you feel strong?"
- "What are the things that have kept you going?"
- "Can you name what you are feeling?"
- "Is there something you need to let go of?"
- "Is there something you want to do before you die?"

## • **BE VULNERABLE - show them you're human too.**

Sharing some of your own experience - "I have felt really angry at the world too sometimes..."

Being open and honest about your own emotional state - "I am struggling with how scared I feel about this conversation..."

Be honest about limitations - "I want to be supportive, but I only have a half hour before I have to..."

Limits to confidentiality - "I want to be up-front with you that my job requires me to call crisis when ..."

## **HELP THEM FIND COMMUNITY**

Suggest resources – ex. Hotline numbers, support groups, visit to GP or mental health practitioner

Chat about joining a social group – ex. A sport or fitness group, a reading group, volunteer at a non-profit, a church group, a choir, a local community garden

**DISCHARGED runs peer support groups for people experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings. For more information visit our website [discharged.org.au](http://discharged.org.au) or send us an email at [info@discharged.org.au](mailto:info@discharged.org.au)**