

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

Date: September 2022

Suicide Awareness – Part 2 “Questioning Intent”

Suicide is preventable if we can create an environment that is accepting to a workforce that feels comfortable reaching out for help. In Suicide Awareness Part 1, we discussed the signs and clues that someone is in a suicidal crisis. In Part 2, we will cover how to question an individual’s intent to die by suicide. “Be the one to” (#BeThe1To) is a national movement by the National Suicide Awareness committee to help promote the awareness of suicide prevention by asking the hard question. There are resources online at 988lifeline.org to help someone with resources once the initial step of asking someone if they are having thoughts of suicide. Also, dialing 988 is now the national 911 for mental crisis and suicide emergencies.

Tips for asking the suicide question:

- If in doubt, don’t wait, ask the question.
- If the person is reluctant, be persistent.
- Talk to the person alone, in a private setting.
- Allow the person to talk freely.
- Give yourself plenty of time.
- Have resources handy: QPR Card, National Suicide Hotline phone number.

When questioning a person’s intent regarding suicide, there is a less direct and direct approach.

Less Direct Approach:

- Ask “Have you been unhappy lately?”
- Ask “Have you been very unhappy lately?”
- Ask “Have you been so very unhappy lately that you’ve been thinking about ending your life?”
- Ask “Do you ever wish you could go to sleep and never wake up?”

Direct Approach:

- Ask “When people are as upset as you seem to be, they sometimes wish they were dead. I’m wondering if you’re feeling that way, too?”
- Ask “You don’t seem to be yourself lately, I wonder if you’re thinking about suicide?”
- Ask “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

IF YOU CANNOT ASK THE QUESTION, FIND SOMEONE THAT CAN!

HEALTHY OR SAFETY REMINDER: Privacy is a rare commodity these days but getting someone into a private setting is critical to making them feel comfortable disclosing suicidal thoughts, feelings, and plans. Be open and prepared to listen. Be sure to give your undivided attention.

It is important that you do not pass judgement when questioning an individual’s intent. Questions like “You wouldn’t do anything stupid would you?” or give the impression you want “no” for an answer. We want to be positive and encourage them to share with us the truth.

Discussion Points/Quiz Questions:

1. It is a myth that talking about suicide or saying the word will cause it to happen.
2. Remember how you ask the question is less important than that you ask it but approach the question with care.
3. Once you have questioned the person’s intent, persuade them to live. (Part 3 will highlight how to persuade).