

## Resources

### American Association of Suicidology

4201 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
202-237-2280  
[www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

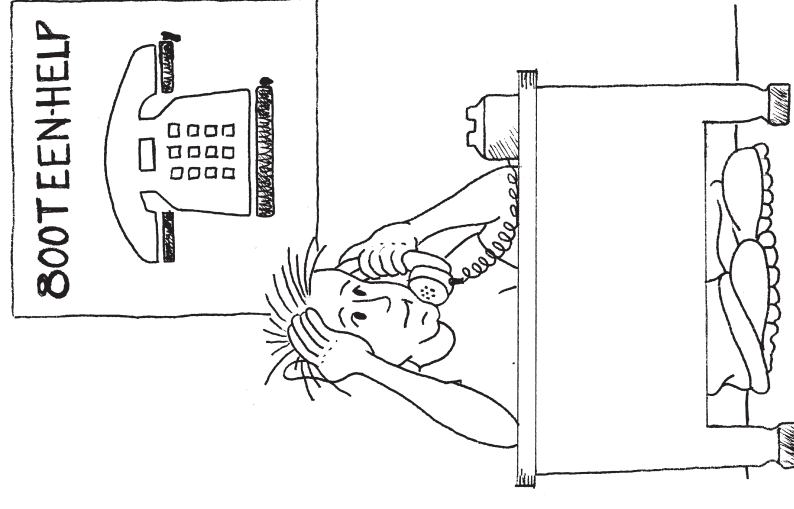
### American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

120 Wall Street, 22nd Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
888-333-AFSP (888-333-2377)  
212-363-3500  
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

## Hotlines

800-784-2433 (800-SUICIDE)  
800-621-4000  
[SuicideHotlines.com](http://SuicideHotlines.com)  
[www.suicide-hotlines.org](http://www.suicide-hotlines.org)

# HOW TO HELP A TROUBLED FRIEND



### NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW • 13th Floor • Washington, DC 20036  
[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)

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TAKE A BITE OUT OF  
**CRIME**

**S**uicide is the third leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Only accidents and homicides take more lives in this age group.

In the past, suicide was viewed as a sin or a crime. Today we understand that someone who thinks or talks about committing suicide is not bad or weird, but deeply troubled and temporarily may be unable to cope with his or her situation. Most seriously depressed people can be helped through counseling and/or medication. Many suicides can be prevented if the problems are brought to light.

## You Can Help by Getting Help

If you have a friend who has threatened or attempted suicide or who hints that he or she might do so (“I’m no good to anybody” or “I won’t be around to bother you much longer”), it is vital to get help as quickly as possible. Talk to your school guidance counselor or your parents. You can locate a suicide and crisis hotline in your state by going online to [SuicideHotlines.com](http://SuicideHotlines.com) or to the international site, [www.suicide-helplines.org](http://www.suicide-helplines.org). Or you can call the National Runaway Switchboard (800-621-4000) or the National Hopeline Network [800-SUICIDE (800-784-2433)] to get help for your friend. Both hotlines operate 24/7.

## You Can Help by Listening

No matter how much you care about your friend, you probably won’t be able to solve his or her problems, but listening may help. Here are some guidelines:

- ▶ Express your concern but don’t be judgmental. Don’t get involved in a debate about suicide.
- ▶ Let your friend talk out negative feelings or thoughts. Don’t try to gloss over the problems by saying, “It’s not that bad,” or “Everything will work out okay.” And don’t feel you have to have the answers. Just listen attentively. Make sure the person knows that you care about him or her.
- ▶ Encourage your friend to talk to a trusted adult or to call a hotline. If you think your friend can’t or won’t do this, do it yourself. It’s not a betrayal of a friend’s trust to seek help that can save a life. Tell an adult or call a hotline. Most hotlines offer anonymity and confidentiality. If you’re not sure how serious the problem is, you can tell the hotline counselor about the behavior you’re worried about, and he or she can help you decide whether your friend needs help and where to find that help.

## Signs That a Person May Need Help

Everybody feels depressed or sad from time to time. But sometimes these feelings last and become overwhelming. Here are some signs that may indicate that your friend needs help:

- ▶ marked personality change;
- ▶ withdrawal from family, friends, and usual activities;
- ▶ changes in eating or sleeping habits;
- ▶ unusual neglect of appearance;
- ▶ inability to concentrate, constant boredom, general feeling of sadness; and
- ▶ complaints about physical ailments that seem to be related to emotions.

People who are particularly vulnerable to suicide may show one or more of the following signs:

- ▶ They’ve made previous attempts.
- ▶ They have a history of mental disorders sometimes combined with alcohol or substance abuse.
- ▶ There is a history of suicide in their family.
- ▶ They have recently suffered a stressful life event or loss.
- ▶ They have easy access to lethal methods (especially guns).
- ▶ They have been exposed to suicidal behavior of others.
- ▶ They have been incarcerated.

## It’s Not Your Fault!

If someone you care about becomes a victim of suicide, you may feel guilty. You may think that there was something you could have done to prevent it. You must keep in mind that nothing you said or did caused that person’s suicide. You are not responsible for it. Talk with a counselor or trusted adult to help understand and deal with your feelings. Even if it’s not your fault, you will still grieve for your friend.