

#BeThe1To: STEPS TO HELP PREVENT SUICIDE

September is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month, a time to promote actions that can help save lives. There were an average of 135 suicide deaths per day and an estimated 1.6 million suicide attempts in 2022, according to the *American Foundation for Suicide Prevention* (AFSP).

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Each September, we join with mental health professionals across the country to help bring awareness to suicide and encourage education in hopes of preventing suicide. Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month is a chance to assess yourself and those around you to understand signs and how to get help. What do you do if someone you love may be having thoughts of suicide?

The **#BeThe1To** campaign, initiated by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, provides actionable steps that anyone can take to help prevent suicide. Here are the five key steps:

1. Be the One to ASK.

Asking someone directly if they are thinking about suicide can be a daunting task, but it is crucial. It shows that you care and are willing to listen. Phrases such as “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” can be asked calmly and directly. By opening this line of communication, you permit the person to share their feelings, which can provide significant relief.

Check out the other steps on the next page.

#BeThe1To Action Steps Continued

2. Be the One to BE THERE.

Being present for someone in distress can make all the difference. This means actively listening and offering support without judgment. Physical presence, a phone call, or even a text message can show that you are there for them. Consistent support can help reduce feelings of isolation and hopelessness, which are often associated with suicidal thoughts.

3. Be the One to KEEP THEM SAFE.

If you believe someone is at immediate risk of suicide, it is essential to take steps to keep them safe. This may involve removing access to means of self-harm, such as firearms or medications, and staying with them until help arrives. Creating a safe environment is a crucial step in preventing an immediate crisis.

4. Be the One to HELP THEM STAY CONNECTED.

Helping someone establish a network of support can provide ongoing encouragement and assistance. This can include connecting them with friends, family, community resources, or professional services such as therapists and counselors. Connect them to ongoing supports like the 988 Lifeline or text "HELP" to the Crisis Text Line's number 741741. Building these connections can create a safety net that fosters long-term stability and hope.

5. Be the One to FOLLOW-UP.

After the initial crisis has passed, follow-up is vital. Checking in with the person regularly can reinforce that you care and are committed to their well-being. Simple actions like sending a message, making a phone call, or meeting for coffee can provide continued support and help them feel valued and connected.

Why It Matters

Suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility. By taking these five steps, we can all play a part in supporting those who may be struggling. The **#BeThe1To** campaign empowers individuals to make a difference in their communities, emphasizing that small actions can have a significant impact. **#BeThe1To** reminds us that suicide can be stopped. By starting the conversation, providing support, and directing help to those who need it, we can prevent suicides and save lives.

If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call 911 immediately. If you are in crisis or are experiencing difficult or suicidal thoughts, call or text the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

For information, education, and support on this and other mental health topics, please contact our program.

WE CAN HELP.

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

Call us today at