



How To Help A Friend: Who Is Contemplating Suicide

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Issue #2

Welcome to the second issue of How To Help A Friend (HTHAF). My name is Mifa Kim. I'm a Senior studying psychology and a peer educator at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). HTHAF is a campaign aimed at sharing information on how CU community members can help friends or other people in their lives who may be encountering various challenges.

September is Suicide Prevention Month. It can be difficult to know when and how to approach a friend or loved one who is contemplating suicide and there can often be a stigma associated with it. It can be seen as a private matter that should not be discussed amongst friends. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students. Since college is a time of adjustment, an environment where people may feel lonely, confused, detached or stressed, students can be especially vulnerable. The first step is to simply ask your friend if they are contemplating suicide. Simply approaching the topic can save a life.

Step 1: Question

Ask your friend if they are thinking about suicide. This makes it clear as to what is going on and will be a relief for both you and your friend. It can be intimidating, but it can save a life! Here are some basic tips:

- 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 without distractions.
- Allow the person to talk freely and allow plenty of time.
- You can ask **directly**: "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"
- You can ask **in-directly**: "Have you been unhappy lately? Have you been so unhappy that you are thinking about ending your life?"

Remember:

If your friend resists getting help and you are worried about their safety or unsure of what to do, **call CAPS for 24/7 support: 303-492-6766**

In the case of an emergency call 911, especially if you think their life is in immediate danger from suicide.

QPR: Question, Persuade and Refer

Step 2: Persuade

If your friend says that they have been thinking about or planning suicide, **the next step is to persuade them to get help.** For example you could ask, "Will you go with me to get help?" or "Will you let me help you get help?" Offering hope of any form can be extremely powerful. Also, listen to them without judgment.

Step 3: Refer

Any willingness to get help at some time, even in the future, is a good outcome. The following is the best three ways to refer someone:

- Taking the person directly to someone who can help. (A counselor, therapist, a pastor, a parent, etc are examples)
- Getting a commitment from them to accept help, and making arrangements to get that help.
- Give them information about resources and get a commitment they will not to complete or attempt suicide.

Resources:

How to Help a Friend— Want more information on suicide or more topics? Worried about someone? This is a peer-to-peer resource to help students help each other.

<http://bit.ly/CAPSHelpAFriend>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)—A free counseling resource for UCB students. CAPS offers six free sessions per academic year and free workshops and groups. They have walk-in hours from M-F, 10am-4pm. They are located at the Center for Community (C4C) at S440.

303-492-6766

<http://counseling.colorado.edu>

Events:

How To Help a Friend Get Together—Get your tea and cookies on! If you have questions about resources or just want to stop by to say hello, **you can join me every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 12:30-2pm at the Foyer** (near the Norlin Commons information desk) at the Norlin Library. Its free too! **The next event will be on October 9th, 2013.**