

## Communicating with Potentially Suicidal Students

There are steps you can take to communicate with a student or colleague that may be suicidal. These [#BeThe1To](#) steps are supported by evidence in the field of suicide prevention. They are:

1. **Ask “Are you thinking about suicide?”** Ask in a direct, unbiased manner, and take the answer seriously. Listen to any reasons they share for being in pain, as well as reasons they want to stay alive. Help them focus on their reasons for living. Studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts. In fact, findings suggest that acknowledging and talking about suicide may result in a decrease in suicidal thoughts.
2. **Keep Them Safe.** If the answer to the first step is “yes, I am thinking of suicide,” it is important to establish immediate safety. Ask if they have a plan, and if so, for the details of that plan. Then remove lethal means from their immediate area, or work with the individual to put safety measures in place. Put time and distance between the person and their chosen method.
3. **Be There.** Find ways to show support for the person at risk. This could mean being physically present, listening without judgment, and following through with the ways you say you’ll be able to support that person. Do not commit to anything you are not able to accomplish.
4. **Help Them Connect.** Helping someone connect with ongoing supports in their community like the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a mental health professional, a faith leader, or a family member can help create a safety net for a suicidal person, and ensures you are not their only source of support. Help them develop a list of people they can contact when they are in crisis.
5. **Follow Up.** After you have had your conversation, removed lethal means, listened without judgement, and helped them connect to resources and support systems, make sure to follow up with the suicidal individual to see how they’re doing in the days and weeks following a crisis. You can leave them a message, send a text, or give a call. Check in to see how they’re doing, and if there’s anything else they might need.