



When a Student Talks of Suicide

A student may make statements about suicide or wishing he/she were dead through direct or indirect verbal expressions, in writing assignment or artwork. You must assess the situation and reduce the crisis state. The following are some specific suggestions.

WHAT TO DO:

- **Remain calm;** remember the student is overwhelmed and confused as well as ambivalent.
- **Encourage the student to talk.** It is okay to talk to the student about his/her feelings. Most students are looking for someone to talk to when they voice issues of wanting to die.
- **LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!** And when you respond, reflect back what you hear the student saying. Clarify, and help him or her to define the problem, if you can.
 - How does the student plan to do it?
 - How long has he/she been planning and thinking about it?
 - What events motivated the student to take this step?
- **Identify some immediate options** (e.g., school and/or community people who can help).
- **Utilize your colleagues,** you'll need back-up. Follow the building/district plan on who to contact (i.e., principal, school social worker or counselor).
- **Contact the student's parents/guardian**

WHAT TO AVOID:

- Don't leave the student alone (even to go to the bathroom) and don't send the student away.
- Don't minimize the student's concerns or make light of the threat.
- Don't promise confidentiality - - promise help and privacy.
- Don't argue whether suicide is right or wrong..
- Don't fall into the trap of thinking that all the student needs is reassurance.