



SAMPLE PROCEDURES FOR SUICIDE INTERVENTION

As a GriefShare leader, how do you recognize and what should you do when a group member is suicidal?

DEFINITIONS

Suicidal threat – An indication, whether verbal or behavioral, that would suggest the possibility of self-destructive behavior.

Suicidal attempt – An actual involvement in some type of self-destructive behavior that does not result in death.

Suicidal – Considering or thinking about engaging in self-destructive behavior. Being suicidal is a state of mind that comes and goes. (The person has a plan and access to the plan.)

Suicide – A self-destructive behavior that results in premature death.

VERBAL SUICIDAL EXAMPLES/CLUES

This list is not inclusive:

“I’m going to kill myself with the bottle of pills I have.”

“Life has lost all its meaning for me.”

“All my problems will be over tomorrow.”

“My family will be better off without me.”

“I just hate to face each day more and more.”

“What does God think of a person who takes his or her own life?”

SAMPLE GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERING TO HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS IN THE GROUP

- 1 Take all plans and threats seriously.
- 2 When a suicidal threat occurs in the group, tell the individual you would like to speak more with him or her after the group, or one leader can stay with the group and the other can take the person out of the room.
- 3 Have a calm and soft-spoken voice. Stay in prayer for the situation.
- 4 Affirm to the individual there is hope and that is why he or she is here at GriefShare. Reassure this person of God’s love even in this situation.

- 5 Convey that help is available and this person's concerns will be listened to.
- 6 Notify the individual's emergency contact person* or person who is readily available to come in and develop a plan of action to help with the situation.
- 7 Immediately contact _____ [pastor's name and/or ministry leader's name] and inform them of the situation.
- 8 Immediately call 911 when a person is a danger to him- or herself or others.

DOS AND DON'TS

- Do take your time with the person and tell the person you care and God cares. (Isaiah 41:10; 1 Peter 5:7)
- Do remind the individual that God has a purpose for his or her life. (Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 43:18–19)
- Do acknowledge the individual's feelings and let this person know he or she is not alone. (Psalm 46:1; Deuteronomy 31:8)
- Don't be judgmental or respond in shock about what he or she is expressing. (Proverbs 3:5–8)
- Don't get sidetracked with the person's questions. (Psalm 119:105)
- Don't try to fix this person's problems or answer his or her questions. Come alongside this individual and guide him or her to the help that is needed. (Matthew 26:38; Philippians 4:13)

Remember, confidentiality is to be maintained except when a person is threatening harm to him- or herself or others

Remember, you can only try to help but you cannot control another person's decisions.

Note: This document contains sample procedures for your church to consider in the development of a suicide response policy. This document is for informational purposes only. You should NOT adopt it for your church or GriefShare group without review and approval by church leadership. You are also encouraged to seek the input of mental health professionals and/or legal advisors in the development of a suicide response policy.

* Collect an emergency contact name as part of your GriefShare registration process.

HELPING OTHERS

The pages referenced below contain helpful information for leaders who desire to create their own suicide intervention document. For more recommended books on suicide, see the LeaderZone Library article "Books and Recommended Resources" for a list of books reviewed and recommended by the GriefShare staff on various topics, including suicide.

Helping People Through Grief by Delores Kuenning
(pp. 175–176)

The New Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling by H. Norman Wright (chapters 14–15)

Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling Youth by Patricia and Keith Miller (pp. 220–223)

Helping Your Struggling Teenager by Dr. Les Parrott III
(pp. 403–411)
