

Topics in this Handout

I-Statements

Setting Healthy Boundaries

Examples of Healthy Boundaries

Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

Behaviors to Watch for

Suicide Risk Factors and Warning Signs

Question, Persuade, Refer

Some Tips on Talking About Suicide

Self-Care

Crisis Resources

Campus Resources

If you want to help a friend, being able to communicate in a healthy manner is a great start. Try utilizing I-Statements:

I-Statements

- Describing how another person's behavior makes you feel
- I-statements - "I feel emotion word when explanation"
- Example: "I feel confused when there is no communication between us."
- Clear and Direct
- Helps others be more aware of the consequences of their actions

Personal boundaries are not only about refraining from abusing or offending others, but also overextending yourself or trying to take care of them. It can be challenging to witness a friend who is in pain or otherwise struggling with problems in life. While it is a friend's role to offer support and encouragement, it is wrong to try to fix someone's problems. Rescuing others from their turmoil is not helpful to them because it prevents them from taking responsibility for themselves.

Setting Healthy Boundaries

- When you identify the need to set a boundary, do it clearly, calmly, firmly, respectfully, and in as few words as possible.
- Do not justify, get angry, or apologize for the boundary you are setting. You are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful manner.
- If it upsets them, know it is their problem. Some people, especially those accustomed to controlling, abusing, or manipulating you, might test you. Plan on it, expect it, but remain firm. Remember, your behavior must match the boundaries you are setting. You cannot successfully establish a clear boundary if you send mixed messages by apologizing.
- At first, you will probably feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed when you set a boundary. Do it anyway and remind yourself you have a right to self-care.
- Setting boundaries takes practice and determination. Don't let anxiety, fear or guilt prevent you from taking care of yourself.
- When you feel anger or resentment or find yourself whining or complaining, you probably need to set a boundary.
- Listen to yourself, determine what you need to do or say, then communicate assertively.
- Learning to set healthy boundaries takes time. It is a process. Set them in your own time frame, not when someone else tells you.

Examples of Setting Healthy Boundaries

- If a friend is unable to keep themselves safe (reporting plans to kill themselves) - "I am not able to help you at the level you need currently and I will be contacting someone who can help you."
- A friend is yelling at you - "You may not continue to yell at me. If you do, I will leave the room and end this meeting."
- If you need some extra time to think about a situation - "I have a policy of not making snap decisions. I need time to think and reflect on what I want to do. If you need an immediate answer it will be no."
- A friend is being critical - "It's not okay with me for you to make comments about my weight. Please stop. If you don't I won't be able to continue this conversation."
- You have too many commitments - "Although this is an important issue to me, I must decline your request for my help at this time." Or "I need to honor my family's needs."
- Lending Money - "I won't be lending you any more money. I care about you and you need to start taking responsibility for yourself."
- In General- "It makes me uncomfortable when...", "I want to share with you how I'm feeling about...", or "We need to come up with a different plan, because this isn't working for me."

It can be very difficult for a person to stop self-harming, and it may take them a long time to do so. If the person says they want to stop, discussing ways to gradually reduce the harming can sometimes be helpful. The important thing here is that the person will need to find a different way of getting the emotions out. Here are some simple things that you can do to help a friend that self-harms:

Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

- Do not make them feel guilty about the effect it is having on others
- Consider your own boundaries regarding how available you choose to be.
- If they do discuss it with you be non-judgmental and respect what the person is telling you, even though you may not understand or find it difficult to accept what they are doing.
- Do not give ultimatums such as "If you don't stop self-harming you have to move out". This is not helpful and it won't work.
- Know that it is NOT your responsibility to prevent self-harm.
- Understand that it is a long and hard journey to stop self-harming. Be aware that someone will only stop self-harming when they feel ready and able to do so.
- Examples of a healthy boundary that could be set is "I care about you, but this is effecting my own mental health"
- Self-harm although maladaptive is the manner in which the person is coping with issues.

It is important to recognize signs of mental health problems in yourself or a friend. While not a complete list, some signs that something might be wrong include:

Behaviors to Watch For

- Hopelessness
- Tearfulness or crying
- Irritability or anger
- Loss of interest in activities
- Change in grades
- Change in appetite
- Drastic Mood changes, behavior, personality, or sleeping habits
- Isolation, or distancing themselves from certain friends or family
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Tiredness or fatigue
- Highly sensitive to criticism, or low self-esteem
- Complain of aches and pains that don't have a medical explanation
- Risky behavior such as recklessness, drinking, drug use, or unsafe sex
- Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss
- Seeing , hearing, or believing things that are not real

If you are concerned that a friend is suicidal these are some warning signs and risk factors:

Suicide Risk Factors and Warning signs

- Any previous suicide attempt
- Acquiring means (ex: stockpiling pills, buying weapons)
- Putting personal affairs in order
- Giving away prized possessions
- Isolation or withdrawing from activities
- Unexplained anger, aggression and irritability
- Co-occurring depression or other mental health disorder moodiness, hopelessness
- Drug or alcohol abuse, or relapse after a period of recovery
- Growing up in a family with violence including physical and sexual abuse
- Family history of mental health disorders or substance use disorders
- Being exposed to others' suicidal behaviors (i.e. family, friends, media figures)

If you see some warnings signs of suicide or are worried about a friend for another reason, here are some tips to help start a conversation with them.

Question, Persuade, Refer

1. Question -Pick a time that feels comfortable, this might be when you're studying, walking across campus together, or hanging at a coffee shop, and ask your friend how they're doing. You can start a conversation in a non-judgmental way with some of these ideas:
 - "It seems like you've been really down lately, and haven't been able to hang out. Is everything ok today?"
 - "I've noticed you're [sleeping more, eating less, etc.], is everything ok today?"
 - "Sometimes when people are as upset as you seem to be, they sometimes wish they were dead. I'm wondering if you're feeling that way, too?"
 - "Have you been having thoughts of suicide?"

-It's a good idea, if you suspect they may be experiencing depression, to ask them if they've considered hurting themselves, or if they have thoughts of suicide. Talking about it won't put the idea in their head, but it could save their life.
2. Persuade – The most important thing you can do for your friend is to listen without judgement to what they're experiencing and how they feel. Try to really understand and empathize with what they're telling you, and don't make assumptions or jump to conclusions. Make sure as you talk with them, you don't brush away their feelings. Reinforce that help is available and encourage them to follow through.
 - "Will you go with me to get help?"
 - "What if we call and make an appointment together?"
 - "Would you walk with me to Counseling Services?"
3. Refer – This could mean encouraging them to talk to their parents, Counseling Services, the ER or other resources listed below.
 - Offer your support by stating, "I really want you to live and together we can get through this". The main point is that they are not alone, and help is available.

If your friend doesn't seem to want to open up about their feelings, don't worry! It does not have to be a one-time conversation. Just letting a person know that you are there for them, that you care, and that you will support them in anything they are dealing with goes a long way.

Some Tips on Talking About Suicide

- If in doubt, don't wait, ask if they are having suicidal thoughts
- If the person is reluctant, be persistent
- Talk to the person alone in a private setting
- Allow the person to talk freely
- Give yourself plenty of time
- Have your resources handy (phone numbers, Counseling Services information, or any other information that might be helpful)

Caring for a friend is important, but it can sometimes take a lot out of you. Make sure that you are taking care of yourself in this process.

Self-Care

- Journal: Write down 3-5 things a day you are grateful for
- Exercise: Take at least 15 minutes a day to move around
- Deep Breathing : Breathe in and out slowly to the count of 4
- Grounding Exercise: Name 3 things you can see, smell, hear, or feel and then breathe in and out slowly 3 times
- Seek counseling for yourself, if necessary

Crisis Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Suicidepreventionlifeline.org: online chat
Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ+): 1-866-488-7386
Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1)
Crisis Text Line: Text "START" to 741-741
The Steve Fund (Persons of Color): Text "Steve" to 741741
Hancock County Crisis Hot Line: 1-888-936-7116
Open Arms (DV & Rape Crisis): (419) 422-4766

If someone is unable to keep themselves safe contact 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Resources on Campus

Academic Support Center	419-434-4697
Business Office	419-434-4690
Campus Security	419-434-4799
Counseling Services	419-434-4526
Disability Services	419-434-5532
Financial Aid	419-434-4791
Health Center	419-434-4550
Intercultural Student Services (ISS)	419-434-6967
Oiler Success Center	419-434-5680
Registrar's Office	419-434-4556
Student Affairs and On-Campus Housing	419-434-4570