

IN A CRISIS

IF THERE IS A SUICIDE THREAT

It is a myth that people who threaten to kill themselves don't do it.

- **ASSUME** that any suicide threat is serious and treat it as a danger to the person's life. A previous suicide attempt increases the likelihood that the person will act on the threat.
- **ASK** in a private, calm setting whether the person is thinking about suicide. Your questions can be indirect ("Do you ever think you should never have been born?") or direct ("Do you feel like you want to die?")
- **FOLLOW UP** if the answer to these general questions is *Yes* and ask about specific suicide plans. When does the person plan to commit suicide? How? Has the person already acquired the means, e.g., pills, gun, etc.
- **DETERMINE** the imminence of the danger based on the answers to these questions. A college freshman who describes a suicide plan for graduation day in four years is probably not in imminent danger. A college senior who is graduating the next day is. Act accordingly.
- **CONTACT** the person's mental health or medical providers and repeat exactly what the person has told you.
- **HIDE** all vehicle keys and any means that could be used for self-harm, e.g., medications (including over-the-counter drugs), knives including kitchen knives, guns, ropes.
- **KEEP** the person sober. Suicide completers have high rates of positive blood alcohol. Intoxicated people are more likely to attempt suicide using more lethal methods. Be aware that the combination of alcohol and Tylenol can be lethal. Be sure there is no Tylenol available if the person is drinking.
- **DO YOUR BEST** to persuade the person to get help voluntarily. Dial the hotline number, drive to the clinic, take a taxi to the ER. Do whatever is necessary to make getting help easy.

Call 911 if the suicide attempt appears imminent.

Print a copy of this list to keep with your list of emergency contacts.

