

## Questions and Answers about Suicide

**Q: What are signs to look for that someone might be suicidal?**

**A: There are certain emotions and behaviors to look for in someone who might be suicidal.**

### Emotions to look for:

- Overwhelming pain
- Hopelessness
- Powerlessness
- Worthlessness, shame, guilt, self hatred
- Sad
- Withdrawn/isolated
- Apathetic, decline in interests
- Anxious
- Irritable
- Anger

### Behaviors to look for:

- Neglect of personal welfare
- Deteriorating physical appearance
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Previous suicide attempts
- Explicit or vague statements regarding death, life, or self-harm
- Reckless behavior
- Making a will, settling debts, giving stuff away
- Inappropriately saying good-bye

**Q: How do I respond to someone I suspect might be suicidal?**

**A: SLAP him/her!**

1. Start with the “Good Neighbor Response”: “**Don’t Do It!**” Show that you care.

2. Assess with the “**SLAP**” technique.

- **S: Specific Details.** What are the specific details of the plan?
- **L: Lethality.** How quickly could they die if they do what they plan?
- **A: Availability.** Do they have the means to implement the plan?
- **P: Proximity.** How close are people who could help?

3. Make a follow-up plan.

• **Get help now:** If the person has specific details in a plan (S), the plan is quickly lethal (L), they have the means to make an attempt (A), and there are few social supports (P), then call for help **immediately**.

• **Plan for follow-up later:** If the SLAP risk factors are not present, encourage the person to get help with their problems, and periodically ask them about their progress.

• **Judgment call:** If some, but not all of the SLAP risk factors exist, then it is a “judgment call,” but always err on the side of saving a life!

**Q: When do I call others to help?**

**A:** You should call others to help when it is apparent that someone is expressing emotions or behaviors of being suicidal. Use your SLAP information to decide whether to get help now or later.

**Q: Who do I call to get help now?**

**A:** You can call:

- Public Safety: 843-349-2911
- Counseling Services: 843-349-2305 (during the work day)
- On-Call Counselor: 843-349-2177 (after the work day)

**Q: What is the difference between being suicidal and just cutting?**

**A:** Being suicidal is having the intent to end one's life. However, cutting is a form of "nonsuicidal self-injury," in which a person has the intention of inflicting harm upon him/herself, without the intent of suicide. Cutting is an unhealthy coping mechanism which may be done for many different reasons, including anxiety, overwhelming sadness, stress relief, and emotional numbness. Cutting is usually done in a secretive manner, usually on body parts that can easily be covered. Although cutting is not usually meant as suicide, it is not uncommon for those who cut to think about suicide. Cutting is less risky than suicide, but it is never safe to cause bodily harm. Help should be sought to replace this unhealthy coping technique with healthy ones.