

WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL TALKS ABOUT SUICIDE

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

WE, THE CHURCH, ARE TO CARE GOD’S FLOCK BY:

- God’s Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-16)
- God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- God’s People (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

When situations arise in the group meeting or for a concern in someone’s life, prayerfully consider the following questions:

- What is really going on? Do I have all the facts?
- What is the most loving thing to do...
 - In the moment: For the person? For the group?
 - Longer term: For the person? For the group?
- What does Scripture say related to this?
- What are the layers of support to help the situation...
 - For the group member?
 - For you as a leader?

You may have an individual say red flag statements. While these statements don’t always mean they have suicidal thoughts, it is important to address them.

RED FLAG STATEMENTS EXAMPLES:

- People would be better off if I were gone.
- This is just too hard, and I don’t know if I can handle it.
- I just want to kill myself. (Even if joking, we always want to take it seriously)

IF SOMEONE ALLUDES TO SUICIDE DURING A GROUP TIME:

- Address in group: It sounds like you are hurting, and I am so glad that you shared that. Pray for them and tell them that you care about them. Let them know that you will be following up with them after group. This communicates to the other individuals that you will handle this and makes firm plans with the possible suicidal participant.
- After group, make sure that you follow up but never have that conversation alone. Always invite another volunteer, leader, or staff member to be in this conversation. We do this for two reasons: wisdom and safety.

While in the follow-up conversation, if an individual confesses to suicidal thoughts, you will listen and show compassion but make sure to ask the follow-up questions.

REMINDER: Do not fear that you are planting the idea of suicide in their mind! That is a myth.

QUESTIONS:

- Do you sometimes feel so bad that you think about suicide?
- Are you having suicidal thoughts?
 - If they say “YES,” then:
 - Ask clarifying/exploratory questions to try to discern if the person is truly suicidal/contemplating ending their life OR expressing feelings of sadness/tiredness but without any intent or thoughts of ending their life.
- Do you have a plan?
- Do you have the means to take your life? Do you know how you would end your life?
- How long has this been going on?

IF THEY SAY “YES” TO ALL QUESTIONS, YOU MAY NEED TO IMMEDIATELY CALL 911.

- First loop others in, just in case others have context or history. There may be a plan of care in place that needs to be followed. If alone, you may not have this option and need to call 911 for help.
- Try to have a second person in the conversation, this will allow the second person to make the call to 911.
- Tell the participant that because we care about them, we must call 911. Not only do we have a legal responsibility to call 911 when someone has a plan to take their life, we do not want to take a chance with anyone following through with the threat.
- If you are not with them in person, try to determine their location and tell them to remain on the line while you call 911.

REMEMBER:

- God is in control. You do not have the power to prevent someone from taking their life. We remind them of truth or share the truth of the gospel.

YOUR ROLE IS TO:

- Call 911 in emergencies to get them the medical help they need.
- Walk them through what will happen next.
- Point them or introduce them to Christ.
- PRAY
- Contact their people (community, mentor, family, friends, or emergency contact) to bring others into the situation.
- Help set up a plan of support and ask their people to take point on this plan.

IF THEY SAY “NO,” THEN:

- Set a meeting: Encourage them in the truth of God’s word, pray with them, set up a time for them to meet with you, your co-leader, coach, and their mentor.
- Ask for a commitment: Ask them to commit to reaching out if they do begin to make a plan to end their life before the meeting.
- Meet:
 - When you meet, ask the mentor to be on point for a more comprehensive plan to care for them.
 - The goal is to set up a support system so that they are not solely dependent on any one person.
 - Encourage them to take steps to begin living biblically – studying God’s Word, stepping out of isolation, etc.
- Plan of care:
 - Making a phone list of people for the individual to call in times of struggling with suicidal thoughts.
 - Make a list of scriptures that are helpful to meditate on.
 - Have them commit to you that they will:
 - Call 911 if they are in danger of harming themselves.
 - Call the list of people when they are not in danger of harming themselves but having thoughts of suicide.

NOTE: If through this process they are not suicidal, but have shared that as a cry for help, communicate that you want them to be open about their struggles of sadness but how serious we will always take it when someone talks about ending their life. Their life is valuable, and we will take every threat very seriously.

RESOURCES:

- re:generation recovery struggle sheets
 - www.regenerationrecovery.org/struggles
 - This page offers one-page resources for a variety of struggles that include depression, anxiety, suicide, and more.
- Book - Depression: Looking Up from the Stubborn Darkness (Revised Edition) by Ed Welch
- Book - Suicide: Understanding and Intervening by Jeffery S. Black

PLAN OF CARE FOR SUICIDE

EXAMPLE: JANE DOE

INITIAL URGENT ASSESSMENT	If you are concerned someone is suicidal, ask these two questions: 1. Are you having suicidal thoughts? If they say "YES," then ask... 2. Do you have a plan to take your life? If they say "YES" to both questions (and have the means to carry out the plan - for example, they own a gun and say they're going to shoot themselves), immediately call 911. If they say "NO" to having a plan to take their life, but are having suicidal thoughts: • See if they are a believer...if not, share the gospel with them. If they are a believer, encourage them in the truth of God's word, pray with them, set up a time right away to meet to develop a plan of care for support. See below for issues to address in this meeting. • Meanwhile, ask them to commit that they will not harm themselves between now and your meeting time and make sure they have a list of a couple people to call in case they are struggling.
EMERGENCY SUPPORT	Help Jane to identify people she can call and talk to when she is struggling with suicidal thoughts. Develop an emergency call list.
SUICIDE AGREEMENT	Talk with Jane about verbally agreeing to call those individuals if she is having suicidal thoughts/prior to attempting suicide. Each person on that emergency list should be educated regarding when to call 911 (if she has a plan and the means to carry it out).
DAILY SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF A 30, 60 OR 90-DAY PLAN (DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION)	Assist Jane in developing her own recovery plan for the next 30 days. This plan should include something to do every day for 30 days. The purpose is to give them daily support while renewing their mind with truth. Part of this plan should include a major recovery ministry as a second layer of support beyond a community group (like re:generation, Courageous Hope or MenD) For example, Sunday may be going to church, Mondays may be coming to re:gen, Tuesdays may be going to the Porch, Wednesdays might be having dinner with a Christian friend, Thursday might be Bible study, etc. Get back together after 30 days to determine the need for the next 30 days.
COMMUNITY/ FRIENDS	Be thinking ... "How can I put layers of support around this person?" Encourage Jane toward building friends/community around her. *Assist Jane in connecting with any individuals that might be of additional support. For example, if they are really struggling with the death of a parent, we can find someone who has been there that would be willing to meet with them and encourage them.
DISCIPLESHIP	Develop a plan to help Jane with her relationship with the Lord. Help her to develop a plan for spending time with God, journaling (this is very helpful for people) and whatever else stirs her affections for the Lord.
SERVING	Helping Jane find a place to serve (even if just greeting) that will help her to focus less on herself and start looking outside herself.
COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITY	Keep all friends caring for Jane updated on communication regarding her progress. We want to all be on the same page on how to love and care for Jane.
ANY OTHER PRESSING BURDENS...	*Financial problems, helping with job loss, unhealthy relationships *Potentially needing a medical evaluation or reevaluation of current medication plan.

