

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress  
Department of Psychiatry  
Uniformed Services University  
[www.CSTSOnline.org](http://www.CSTSOnline.org)



Center for the Study  
of Traumatic Stress

# 5 Steps to Save a Life

# 5 Steps to Save a Life

## Help Prevent Suicide

*(Adapted from the National Institutes of Mental Health)*

- **Ask:** “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” It’s not an easy question but studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts.
- **Keep them safe:** Reducing a suicidal person’s access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. While this is not always easy, asking if the person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.
- **Be there:** Listen carefully and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling. Findings suggest acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.
- **Help them connect:** Save the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline’s number in your phone so it’s there if you need it: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You can also help make a connection with a trusted individual like a family member, friend, spiritual advisor, or mental health professional.
- **Stay Connected:** Staying in touch after a crisis or after being discharged from care can make a difference. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.