How to Ask About Suicide

Take a deep breath
It's okay to be scared or anxious about asking the question. Suicide is not something most of us are used to talking about. Get comfortable being uncomfortable, and take a deep breath to ground yourself.

Know your resources
Be familiar with the support resources available, like school counselors, a community mental health agency, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or the Trevor Lifeline.

Create a safe space
Find a place that is private and comfortable. Think of how this person likes to talk. Do they prefer sitting face-to-face? Or talking while walking? Take a moment to silence your cell phone and close the door.

Start with "I've noticed..."
State the reasons you're concerned about them, like changes in mood, recent life events, or concerning behaviors. Remind them that you care.
Ask open ended-questions
To get the conversation going, ask open-ended questions like, “I’d like to understand more about what you’re going through. Can you tell me more?”

Ask the question
Use direct language. Ask if they have been thinking about suicide or ending their life. Using the word suicide sends the message, "We can talk about this here." Avoid using terms like "hurting yourself", which is different from suicide.

Listen without judgement
Avoid problem-solving and advice-giving. Instead, show them that they are being heard. Nod, say "uh huh", and ask questions.

Connect with resources and follow up
Connect them with the resources you've gathered. Offer to call or connect to these resources with them. Finally, make a plan to follow up and ask how they are doing in the near future.

We Need You Here.

THRIVE