How Do I Help Someone Who Is Suicidal? By KAT DAWKINS (on Psych Central)

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 34,598 Americans died by suicide in 2007.
You can help someone in your life get help. Hearing a friend or family member express that they want to commit suicide is very upsetting. Some people think that talking the person out of their suicidal thoughts or ignoring their comments is the best way to go about the situation.

However, action is always the best choice.

**The Mayo Clinic** recommends the following:

Start asking questions.
Is your loved one in danger of acting on their suicidal feelings? First, remember to be sensitive. Then, ask direct questions, such as:

Do you feel like giving up?
Are you thinking about hurting yourself?
Are you thinking about committing suicide?
Have you thought about how you would do it? When you would do it?
Do you have a means to commit suicide?
Asking about suicidal thoughts won’t make someone self-destruct. Actually, talking about their feelings might help.

Be on the lookout for warning signs.
It’s important to know that it may not always be obvious that someone is considering suicide. Here are some common signs you may be able to notice:

Making statements such as “I’m going to kill myself” or “I wish I were dead”
Gaining the means to commit suicide, such as pills or a gun
Withdrawing; wanting to be left alone
Mood swings
Preoccupation with death, dying, or violence
Feeling trapped or hopeless
Changing the normal routine, whether it be sleep, eating habits, or attendance patterns
New or increased substance abuse
Reckless driving or other risky behavior
Saying goodbye as if for the last time or getting affairs in order
Personality changes

**Don’t be afraid to act.**
Get emergency help if you believe someone is in danger of committing suicide or has made a suicide attempt.
Don’t leave the person alone
Call 911 or your local emergency line immediately
(Option 2: If it is completely safe to do so, you may transport the person to the nearest hospital. If in doubt, call 911)
Try to find out if the person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or if they have overdosed
Tell a friend or family member what is going on

**It’s better to be safe.**
It’s always better to ask a trained professional to help if you feel that you cannot handle the situation yourself.
Your loved one may have to be hospitalized until the crisis has passed.

If you are in a crisis and need help right away, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This free service is available to everyone. You may call for yourself or someone you care about. All calls are confidential.