

# Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Guide

**Created by students,  
for students**

**Live to Tell**

**Student-led suicide  
prevention non-  
profit organization**

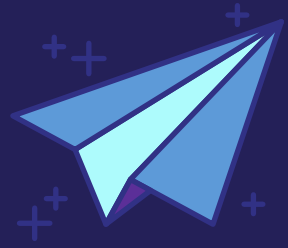


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# Preface

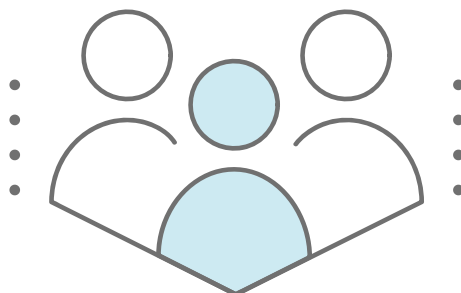


**Our goal with this guide was to bridge the gap between important resources and youth, creating a better environment for all students in Salem-Keizer. The information here is by no means all encompassing- we simply gathered what we believed to be the most essential pieces after meeting with several important leaders in suicide prevention statewide. If you have any suggestions for additions to this guide, please reach out to us at [admin@livetotellnonprofit.org](mailto:admin@livetotellnonprofit.org).**

**Live to Tell Board of Directors**

# Testimonies

**One of the primary reasons we decided to make this guide from students for students is that we want to show all of you that you are not alone in your suffering. Mental illness burdens many of us, and to further show you that, we asked some of your peers for anonymous testimonies regarding their mental health. These testimonies can be found here. Some questions relate to what helped these students, and other's relate to what could have helped. Please take this as an opportunity both to see that others are going through the same thing as you and also to learn more about what should be done to support each other.**



# **What could have helped you or someone you know who lived through mental trauma?**

**"Simply asking how I'm doing would be a start."**

**"Have someone listen to what I was feeling."**

**"Talked to me and tried to understand what i was going through."**

**"Notice me. It hurts to just be pushed to the background when your personal life is already hard. I wish people would have recognized my accomplishments. I was going through a horrible experience but I still did good okay in school."**

**"My mom could have helped. I asked her to get me a counselor and she never did and then got mad at me when i got in contact with someone."**

**"They could have listened and been there for me they knew I was like this but didn't do anything about it."**

**"If at least one person would have went out of there way to check on me not just because I cried for help but just because they were genuinely concerned would have made things so much different."**

# **What was one thing that did help you or someone you know who lived through mental trauma?**

**"Knowing that people cared about me and would help me get better."**

**"A school counselor."**

**"My brother helped me a lot. After it all happened my brother was the only thing I felt like I had left and the only person who wasn't broken in my life."**

**"Having someone you can trust."**

**"My [boyfriend] helped me a lot."**

**"My family members and friends not telling me how I hurt them with what I did but maybe asked what I needed or how I felt."**

**What was the one thing that made you or someone you know who was suicidal decide not to take your/their life?**

**"I've decided against it before due to people/events."**

**"I thought about the people that I would leave behind they would suffer like I was at that moment. I didn't want that. Also I wanted to see what I could achieve in life."**

**"Hope that things would eventually get better."**

**"My friends and family. as much as I felt alone I didn't want to hurt them."**

**"I didn't want to let my little brother down."**

**"My [boyfriend] wouldn't be here without me in his life."**

**"How it may effect those around me and and how many people I would hurt by taking my life."**

**Did you or the person in your life who suffered ever reach out for help? If not, what kept you/them from doing so?**

**"I never reached out because I didn't want to worry others instead or lower the standard for me. I worked for my self and gained my self-love back and here I still am today happier with a healthier mindset."**

**"I did reach out. A few months After my attempt i reached out to a therapist."**

**"I did try but I couldn't put it into words. I actually ended up texting my mom from the room next to her saying 'I can't get myself to say this out loud because it hurts too much but this is how I feel.'"**

**"Yes I have."**

**"My own self kept me from reaching out because I didn't think I needed it until it was too late."**



# **If you could change one thing about your family or community with regards to dealing with mental illness and suicidality, what would it be?**

**"I wish people wouldn't invalidate others' struggles because they feel their struggles aren't important enough."**

**"I hope that the community understands that we grow up in a world with many issues and that they also contribute to our well being. It's stressful but because we are kids we are told that we don't understand or shouldn't worry. In addition I would like to have older generations to understand more about mental illnesses. My parents don't believe in it and I'm sad that this is true in many other families and older generations."**

**"Educate themselves."**

**"I went through all of middle school with amazing grades and not one person told me I was going a good job. Not one. The only kids that would get recognition were the most well know and the kids who did the worse. maybe it is selfish but i was always in the middle but I struggled so so heavily."**

**"I would change the way they speak to me. i wish they would just get me help."**

**"Listen to people. Meds and therapy don't help everyone they just need people to be there for them."**

**"It's real it's not all made up in our heads we aren't trying to get attention we are in need of help even if we refuse it never give up on us and always be there for us."**

# Signs of Suicidal Thoughts

Suicidal ideation can look different for each person. In this section, we have compiled a list of some of the most common signs. Just because someone is not exhibiting a sign included on this list does not mean that they are not having suicidal thoughts. The most important thing to remember is: when in doubt, ASK. If you have even the slightest suspicion that someone you know is contemplating suicide, **ASK** them directly. The potential to save someone's life is worth the possible social awkwardness, and they will likely appreciate the concern.



**The most common signs of suicidal ideation can be divided into two groups: non-verbal (not related to speech) and verbal (related to speech). Here is a list of some of the most common non-verbal indicators:**

- **Social withdrawal**
- **Persistent drop in mood/extreme mood swings**
- **Disinterest in maintaining personal hygiene or appearance**
- **Uncharacteristically reckless behavior**
- **Poor diet changes, rapid weight changes**
- **Distraction**
- **Anger/agitation/aggression**
- **Insomnia/sleeping too much**
- **Alcohol or drug abuse, especially new habits**
- **Giving away sentimental or expensive possessions**
- **Fatigue**
- **Relief/Sudden improvement (both in school and related to other signs)**

- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Loss of interest**
- **Irritability**
- **Humiliation/Shame**
- **Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods**
- **Dangerous or self-harmful behavior**
- **Excessive sadness or moodiness**
- **Recent trauma or life crisis**
- **Sudden calmness**

**Here is a list of some of the most common verbal indicators:**

- **Hopelessness**
- **Failing to see a future**
- **Believing they are a burden to others**
- **Saying they feel worthless or alone**
- **Talking about their death or wanting to die**
- **Having no reason to live**
- **Feeling trapped**
- **Unbearable pain**
- **Threatening suicide**

**One important sign to consider is that of depression. Here are some signs that can indicate that someone is suffering from depression:**

**Behavior:**

- **Not going out anymore**
- **Not getting things done at work/school**
- **Withdrawing from close family and friends**
- **Relying on alcohol and sedatives**
- **Not doing usual enjoyable activities**
- **Unable to concentrate**
- **Self harm**
- **Recklessness**

**Feelings:**

- **Overwhelmed**
- **Guilty, thinking that everything that goes wrong is their fault**
- **Irritable/angry**
- **Frustrated**
- **Lacking confidence**
- **Unhappy**
- **Indecisive**
- **Disappointed**
- **Miserable**

- **Sad all the time, crying a lot**
- **Feelings of helplessness and and hopelessness**
- **Loss of interest in daily activities**
- **Self-loathing**
- **Restlessness and agitation**
- **Feeling anxious all of the time**
- **Having difficulty concentrating or remembering things**
- **Indecisiveness**
- **Low self-confidence and self-esteem**

### **Physical:**

- **Tired all the time**
- **Sick and run down**
- **Headaches and muscle pains**
- **Churning gut**
- **Sleep problems**
- **Loss or change of appetite**
- **Significant weight loss or gain**
- **Loss of energy**
- **Unexplained aches and pains**
- **Smoking and/or drinking more than usual, or using drugs**
- **Less interest in intimate relations**
- **Self-harming**

# What to Say

**Because of the stigma that surrounds suicide and mental health, it can be really awkward to take action or speak up when you think someone else might be going through something. However, this stigma is something that we as the next generation of students need to work to get rid of, as it costs lives. If you have reason to suspect someone's mental health might be suffering or they might be considering ending their life, please don't hesitate to start a conversation using the below tips.**



**1. Start by asking questions- remain sensitive to their feelings while being direct and thoughtful about how you choose to word them. Asking these difficult questions does not increase the likelihood of them attempting suicide, but rather decreases the stigma, alleviates feelings of isolation and offers support, which in turn can actually decrease the likelihood of a suicide attempt.**

**a. How are you coping with what's been happening in your life?**

**b. Do you ever feel like just giving up?**

**c. Are you thinking about dying?**

**d. Are you thinking about hurting yourself?**

**e. Are you thinking about suicide?**

**f. Have you ever thought about suicide before, or tried to harm yourself before?**

**g. Have you thought about how or when you'd do it?**

**h. Do you have access to weapons or things that can be used as weapons to harm yourself?**

**i. Are you scared to be alone right now?**

**j. How can I best support you right now?**

**Asking questions allows you to better understand the severity of the situation and how they are feeling, but also gives the person an opportunity to voice their feelings which can offer them some temporary relief from their feelings and make them feel less alone.**



**2. DO Validate their emotions and express your genuine concern about them and their well being.**

**a. “It sounds like you are going through a lot, can you tell me more about it? I’d like to listen and offer support any way that I can.”**

**3. DON’T Argue with their negative statements, instead offer positive feedback and comments while still acknowledging that their feelings are real and fair**

**a. “I know you feel hopeless right now, but we will get you the help you need together. You are not alone.”**

**4. DO Encourage them to seek professional help and offer to help them research options or look through resources together.**

**a. “I know you feel like you are alone right now, but I am here for you and there are a lot of people who care about you. Have you considered talking to a counselor or therapist?”**

**5. DO Help them to create a personalized “safety plan.” Help them make a list of the people they will contact if their suicidal thoughts or depression escalates. DO NOT pressure them into putting you on this list- if they have other people they would feel more comfortable talking to then you need to support that.**

**a. This list could include family members, friends, a neighbor, teachers, counselors, coworkers, etc. It should ALWAYS include a 24 hour suicide hotline**

- 6. Ways you can start a conversation about suicide:**
- a. “I have been feeling concerned about you lately.”
  - b. “Recently I have been noticing some differences in you and was wondering how you were doing.”
  - c. “I wanted to check in with you because you haven’t seemed like yourself lately.”
  - d. “You have been distant lately, how have you been doing?”

**7. DO say things like:**

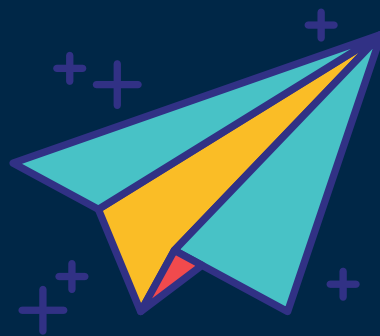
- a. “You are not alone in this, I am here for you.”
- b. “It may not feel like it now, but the way you’re feeling will get better.”
- c. “I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and I want to help.”
- d. “You are so important to me, you matter.”

**8. DON’T say things like:**

- a. Don’t argue with them or belittle their feelings “You have so much to live for” “Your suicide will hurt your family” “Just snap out of it”
- b. “I promise I won’t tell anyone” if you promise confidentiality then you may have to break your promise if you are worried there is an imminent danger and need to tell an adult or professional.
- c. Make them justify their feelings or struggles, it is not about how bad the problem is, but rather how badly it is hurting them.

# Resources & How to Act

**After you have started a conversation, it may be time to take action. If you've had a discussion with your peer and they admit that their mental health is suffering or that they are contemplating suicide, it is certainly time to take action. Also, if they deny needing help, but you still suspect they need it, please use these resources and take these steps.**



# What Steps to Take

- **If someone is at immediate risk for suicide, call 911 immediately.** This is the most important thing and should take place whenever you get the feeling that someone is about to attempt suicide right then.
- **Beyond this, the best series of steps to take corresponds with the acronym "QPR." These steps, taken from a suicide prevention training program created by an organization called the "QPR Institute," are detailed below.**

## Q - Question

**If you are not yet sure, directly ask whether they are contemplating suicide. This question should sound like "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" NOT like "You're not thinking of killing yourself, right?" (the second one leads the person to want to answer "no"). When asking this question, you want to maximize the chances that your peer answers truthfully, so you want to sound calm and supportive, have this conversation in private, allow the person to talk freely, and be persistent about staying on topic. Keep some resources on hand for the next steps.**

## P - Persuade

After you have found out that your peer is contemplating suicide, the next step (after calling 911 if the threat is immediate) is to try to remove the immediate threat by persuading the person to stop considering suicide or to move away from that situation. To do that, follow these steps:

1. Listen to their problem with full attentiveness. This shows that you care and are listening. This also means not passing any judgement and using supportive language.
2. Make it clear that suicide is off the table. Be firm (not unkind or commanding, but firm) that suicide is not an option, and that you need to get help now.
3. Offer hope in any form that you can. Show them that you really care for them, that you want them to live, that you are on their side. Stay on the positive here.
4. PERSUADE. Here, you say "will you go with me to get help?" You can bargain for time, saying something like "just give me 20 more minutes with you, I'll make sure you get help." You can literally call one of the resources later on in this guide and put the phone up to their ear or put the phone on speaker. Somehow, firmly and kindly convince that person to move away from the danger and into a situation where they can get help.
5. Make your goal to get them in a car where you can take them to a physical location to get help.

## **R - Refer**

**Even though this guide is all about you helping your peers, you are not a mental health professional. These tips are all for immediate crisis management. This is the part of the process where you refer the person to someone who is qualified to make sure they stay safe. If you are in school, this could mean going to your counseling office. If not, any of the in-person locations we have included later in the guide will work fine. Any physical location can also be supplemented by hotlines, chatlines, and text lines, all mentioned later on in the guide. This is also the time to get other support people involved, such as parents, siblings, or close friends - anyone who will be a comforting presence to the person contemplating suicide. Another tip is to consistently check up on the person after you have referred them. This serves two purposes: it ensures that they know that you are there for them and also that they are still there and in a situation where they can receive continued help.**

# Calling and Texting

**1. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 800-273-TALK (8255)**

- This is available 24/7 in both English and Spanish. There is also a chat feature at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/)

**2. YouthLine: Call 877-968-8491 or text teen2teen to 839863**

- This service connects the suicidal youth to another youth, allowing a peer-to-peer connection

**3. Northwest Human Services Hotline: 503-581-5535**

- Available for free 24/7

**4. Marion County Crisis Line: 503-576-HOPE (4673)**

**5. Polk County Crisis Line: 503-623-9289 (503-581-5535 after hours)**

**6. Psychiatric Crisis Center for Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties: 503-585-4949**

**7. The 9 line: 800-999-9999**

- **Miscellaneous help for youth**

**8. Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741-741**

- **Available for free 24/7**

**9. RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-HOPE (4673)**

- **Also has an online chat feature at [hotline.rainn.org/online/terms-of-service.jsp](https://hotline.rainn.org/online/terms-of-service.jsp)**

**10. National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline: 866-331-9474**

**11. The Trevor Project (Hotline for LGBTQIA+ youth):**

- **Call 866-488-7386**
- **Text START to 678-678**
- **Use the online chat feature at [thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/](https://thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/)**

**12. SAMHSA Treatment Referral Hotline for Substance Abuse: 800-662-HELP (4357)**

- **Can also find treatment close by at [samhsa.gov/find-treatment](https://samhsa.gov/find-treatment)**



# **In-Person Resources in Salem**

- **School counselors or nurses**
- **Doctor's office**
- **The Emergency Room (890 Oak St SE, Salem, OR 97301)**
- **Marion County Children's Behavioral Health (21421 Lancaster Dr., Salem 97301. Phone (503) 588-5352)**
- **Psychiatric Crisis Center (1118 Oak St SE, Salem, OR 97301.)**

# Other Resources

- **Youth Era: an organization looking to uplift and support youth around Oregon.**
  - **Daily virtual drop on Discord from 3-6 pm on weekdays. Speak with other youth who are experiencing the same thing as you:**  
**<https://discord.com/invite/4n4h2K4>**
  - **Daily livestream on Twitch. Peer support from Monday-Friday from 8 am to 3 pm. You will always find at least two youth peer support specialists:**  
**<https://www.twitch.tv/youthera>**
  - **Engage with any of the project members. Many of them are certified and have gone through a lot of trauma in their lives. All of them will be willing to help support you:**  
**<https://www.youthera.org/team>**
  - **Get referred by your parent or guardian to become part of the Wraparound program at Youth Era, where they will help develop a support plan customized to you:**  
**<https://www.youthera.org/wraparound>**
  - **Drop-in Centers- Safe spaces in communities around Oregon where students can come to feel safe, welcome, included, and accepted. They can meet new people, gain leadership skills, etc.:**  
**<https://www.youthera.org/drop-in-centers>**

- **ACEs Connection: a blog/forum where professionals around the country discuss how childhood traumas affect mental health and how we can overcome them. The mid-valley community blog can be found here: <https://www.acesconnection.com/g/mid-valley-community-connections-or>**
- **The JED Foundation consolidates a wealth of resources and “what-ifs” for people who may be going through a crisis or may be concerned about someone else who is going through a tough time: <https://www.jedfoundation.org/mental-health-resource-center/>**
- **The American Association of Suicidology has scholarly and governmental information regarding suicide and resources for people who may be suicidal. The resource page can be found here: <https://suicidology.org/resources/>**
- **The Oregon Department of Education has released a list of 10 mental health resources and informational sheets geared towards educators: [https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/COVID-19-Mental-Health.aspx?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/COVID-19-Mental-Health.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)**

- **The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) has some amazing resources.**
  - **This is the link to the Oregon chapter:**  
<https://afsp.org/chapter/oregon>
  - **What to do when you're:**
  - <https://afsp.org/when-someone-is-at-risk>
  - <https://afsp.org/im-having-thoughts-of-suicide>
  - <https://afsp.org/after-an-attempt>
  - <https://afsp.org/find-a-support-group>
- **Some support groups around Oregon (not Salem)**
  - <http://www.suicide.org/support-groups/oregon-suicide-support-groups.html>
- **Helpguide.org is another great resource for both those struggling and those worried about others.**
  - <https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/suicide-prevention.htm>
- **Crisistrends.org provides data on different crises we face around the country, including mental illness and suicidality.**
- **The Mid-Valley Suicide Prevention Coalition brings together more resources**
  - <https://mvsuicideprevention.org/>
  - **Most notable is their video library which aims to share encouragement and show teens that they are not alone in their suffering:**  
[https://mvsuicideprevention.org/resources/display/video\\_library](https://mvsuicideprevention.org/resources/display/video_library)

# Self Care

**One key aspect of suicide prevention that it can be easy to forget is that we need to make sure that we are staying mentally healthy too, not just supporting our friends. In this section, you can find ways to manage your stress and keep yourself mentally healthy.**



- **Download meditation apps such as Headspace**
- **Call/Video Call people! They could be friends or family, make sure they have good vibes and make you feel happy!**
- **Don't watch the news for a while, too much negativity is not good for someone's health.**
- **Go outside, go for a run, take a walk alone, with family, or with friends! Go to a park.**
- **Move! You can dance, workout, do yoga, etc...**
- **Do some arts and crafts.**
- **Fill your mind with positive thoughts and not negative ones, do what you've wanted to do such as baking, painting, music playing, etc...**
- **Take some time away from your phone, unplug and read a book or magazine**
- **Consider the health of others, one of the best ways to feel better is to make others feel better too!**
- **Reach out to your family**

- **Create a schedule for your days, structure allows for more productivity which will lead to a happier day.**
- **Make your bed to start the day.**
- **Of course, reach out to a professional to help you.**
- **Make sure to maintain a healthy lifestyle, eat right, get lots of sleep, and exercise regularly.**
- **In terms of COVID-19, gather the facts for COVID-19 so you can accurately evaluate your risk and severity of the virus for your age group. Remember, there is a difference between gathering facts and watching the news**
- **Recall past things you've done to overcome past difficulties.**
- **Make a schedule for your day**
- **What's up? - App**
- **PTSD Coach - (free app put out by the VA to help with anxiety**
- **and depression – focuses on taking action)**
- **Eat healthily**
- **Stay off of screens 30-60 minutes before bed**

# Get Involved

**Oregon has the 9th worst suicide rate in the country according to the CDC, and it is the second leading cause of death for youth according to the AFSP. This means that we as the next generation need to do everything we can to combat this issue. For this reason, we have included a list of ways for students to become involved with local suicide prevention efforts below.**





- **Youthline:** <https://oregonyouthline.org/>. Allows students to answer a crisis line
- **The Youth and Young Adult Engagement Advisory (YYEA):** <https://www.youthera.org/yyea>. Allows students to become involved with a statewide agency related to youth stressors
- **The Trevor Project:** <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-involved>. The Trevor Project is an amazing compilation of resources, support, and blog posts regarding LGBTQ youth who may be suicidal. They have lots of opportunities for youth to get involved.
- **Youth Era Trainings:** OHA certified trainings that can allow you to become better versed in peer support: <https://www.youthera.org/trainings>
- **Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide:** <https://oregonalliancetopreventsuicide.org/>. This group is not just for youth, but motivated youth can fill out an application. This is an extension of the OHA which unifies all the suicide prevention efforts in the State of Oregon and advises the Oregon Health Authority on steps to take to prevent suicide statewide.

- **Start a club at your school, or become involved with one that already exists. For more information on how to do this, send Live to Tell an email at [admin@livetotellnonprofit.org](mailto:admin@livetotellnonprofit.org).**
- **Apply to become a Live to Tell board member at <https://livetotellnonprofit.org/apply/>**
- **Donate to any suicide prevention effort. There are hundreds of these at community, state, national, and worldwide levels.**
- **ASHA: <https://myasha.org/share-your-story/>. Share your story with others who may be struggling in order to spread hope and show others that they are not alone.**

## **Key Takeaways**

- **Always aim to give your peers hope**
- **Never be afraid to ask questions your peers whether they are contemplating suicide - it shows concern, not nosiness or awkwardness**
- **Know how to get help and be ready to share that information with anyone who needs it**
- **Never judge someone for admitting feelings of depression or suicidality**
- **Never question whether someone's feelings are valid or genuine.**
- **You can make a difference in someone's life - continue to spread positivity and support others.**

# About Us

**Live to Tell is a registered 501(c)(3) charitable organization that aims to reduce the stigma around suicide, provide resources to struggling youth, and advocate for students and youth around the Salem-Keizer School District. We are always looking to expand our organization and would love for you to apply to our board at <https://livetotellnonprofit.org/apply>.**