



TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE

HOW TO ASK THE SUICIDE QUESTION

To get the conversation going...

"Have you been so unhappy lately that you're thinking life isn't worth living?"

"Do you sometimes wish you could just go to sleep and not wake up?"

But the best way is to ask directly...

"You seem really miserable...are you feeling suicidal?"

"Have you been thinking about killing yourself?"

TIPS FOR HAVING THE "SUICIDE CONVERSATION"

- **Stay calm.** If you act calm, it also will help calm down your child.
- **Talk privately and allow plenty of time.**
- **Offer your full attention.**
- **Ask directly whether he or she is considering suicide.** If you ask indirectly or euphemistically, you may not get an honest answer. If you ask directly, you are indicating to your child that it's safe to talk with you candidly – and this will come as a huge relief to him or her. He or she no longer has to keep the painful feelings locked up inside.
- **Let your child know you really "hear" how bad she feels, without "judging" or minimizing what she says.** If you show that you accept her feelings for what they really are, it helps him or her to feel understood, less alone, and your child is more likely to continue to confide in you and accept your help.
- **Offer hope.** Suggest that perhaps he wants the awful *pain* to end more than he really wants *life* to end. And that you'll help him find a way to make life less painful.
- **Be persistent.** Trust your gut. Don't let your child blow you off if you really suspect suicidal thinking.
- **End the conversation with a concrete and realistic "what next" plan.** Suicidal people need immediate help. Settling on a concrete plan (which, depending on his or her risk level, could be anything from making a therapy appointment to taking the child directly to the emergency room) indicates that positive alternatives to suicide do exist – and that you will help him or her find those alternatives.

If you can't bring yourself to have this conversation with your child, find someone who can as soon as possible!!!

