



The Bridge Church | Suicide Awareness Conversation Guide

Conversations around mental health can be difficult to navigate. As our church continues to teach and resource our people around these subjects, one particularly heavy conversation you may have with someone is around the topic of suicide. Unfortunately, in our culture, suicide rates have risen drastically in the last few years. Because of this, we want you to be as resourced as possible should you find yourself in a conversation with someone that you suspect or who overtly informs you that they may attempt to take their own life.

Ultimately, if you interact with someone who is considering suicide, your goals should be to listen to them and connect them with a mental health professional who can care for them. A helpful strategy to employ for this interaction is called QPR, which stands for Question, Persuade, Refer. QPR is meant to be thought of like CPR. You don't have to be a doctor to perform CPR, but you could be the key interaction that will save someone's life while you help connect them to a health professional. While there is no standardized solution that we can institute, below are some best practices to be aware of for our church leadership team.

Question

The first step in having this conversation is **identifying whether or not someone has considered suicide**. The simple and best way to do this is to **be direct**. Don't be afraid to say the word suicide.

- You cannot put the idea of suicide into someone's mind. They are either thinking about it or not.

If in doubt, don't wait. Ask the question.

Listen. Don't underestimate the power that listening has to restore hope in someone's life.

Be Persistent, not pushy. Allow the person to talk freely. Some examples of how to frame the question may sound like this:

- "You know when people are as upset as you, they sometimes wish they were dead. Do you feel that way too?"

Don't ask the leading question, "You're not suicidal are you?", as it can encourage secrecy around suicidal ideation.

Persuade

After you identify the desire to attempt suicide, your next step should be to **convince them of another solution**. This starts with listening to the problem and giving them your full attention.

Remember, suicide is not the problem. To them, it is the perceived solution to an unsolvable problem. What's making them think that?

Your goal is to offer hope in any form.

This step should include securing their cooperation in seeking a solution. For instance: "Will you go with me to get help?" or "Will you let me help you get help?"

Use “we” language.

- “I want you to live, we will get through this.”
- “Sounds like that isn’t working... let’s try something else.”

As church leaders, I would heavily encourage you to share God’s word with them. Here are some scriptures that could help:

- **Psalm 34:18-19:** The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.
- **John 10:10:** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
- **Psalm 139:13–14:** “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”
- **Jeremiah 29:11:** “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Refer

Your ultimate goal is to connect them with a mental health professional that can help. We have a pastoral care process in place that is designed to do just this. The best way to initiate this is to reach out to Paul or Hannah at paul@bridge.tv or hannah@bridge.tv.

If you deem that the scenario is an emergency please immediately **contact either 988 or 911 emergency response**. Some helpful things to know about these calls:

- 988 and 911 are the same center, however 988 connects you immediately with the mental health specialists.
- Calling these lines will connect you with a qualified professional who will be able to talk to anyone considering suicide. **Calling this line does not mean that they will automatically dispatch emergency response.** It is perfectly normal to simply call and have a conversation.
- It is common, if the person you are talking to is willing, to call these lines on speaker with them. This can help them feel at ease.

The best referral involves taking the person directly to someone who can help.

Get others involved.

- You can ask them “Who is someone you trust to talk to about this? Will you talk to them about this? I can be with you.”

Remember, no two of these conversations will be the same, and you are not expected to have all the answers. However, you can be the solution that makes a difference in someone’s life. For further resources that are available, please take some time to review bridge.tv/notalone.