

Let's Talk: ACT for suicide prevention

Presenter – Dr. Gabriela Cora, Medical Director

Hi, I'm Dr. Gaby Cora. If you were walking in the middle of the street or you were in a meeting or you were in the middle of a class and someone just dropped and stopped breathing and their heart stopped beating, what's the first thing that you would try to do? CPR, right? You would just jump in, call 911 and then start giving CPR to that person. There are more and more people who are being trained to offer CPR ranging from middle and high schoolers to other people at work. It's something that it's a great, great talent that we can put into practice at any given time. Now, let's say you're at a restaurant and someone just chokes. What would you want to do? You would try to jump in and offer the Heimlich maneuver which may pretty much save their life. Now, what would you do if someone told you that they wanted to hurt themselves? That seems like a tougher one, right? Usually we would just jump in if we knew that someone just dropped to the ground and stopped breathing or if we saw that someone was choking but why is it so different in terms of deciding how we can help if someone is telling us they they're thinking of hurting themselves?

ACT: Acknowledge

One of the easiest ways of doing this is to remember to ACT. The first point is to acknowledge that you understand that the person is not feeling well. Just by looking at them in the eye and just offering a good ear so that they can open up and tell you how they've been feeling and for how long may just make a huge difference to them.

ACT: Care

The second part which is the C is to care, to show that you care about that person and their safety. That also makes a difference as many people who are contemplating the thought of hurting themselves may just live within their heads or inside of themselves. So just by being able to verbalize, to express the fact that they're not feeling well and to hear that someone is caring about them may make a huge difference in what to do next.

ACT: Take action

And the T stands for take action. Do something about this. You usually wanna give two options to the person. They can either seek help with you accompanying them or standing by them or you may want to let them know that you really do want to be very proactive about this and that you're gonna seek help for them. Phrasing it this way makes it easier for them to realize that they either need to seek help themselves or realize that you're ready to help them right next to them.

Ways to get help

And who is it that you go to? You can either call 911 or suicide prevention lines but you can also if you're a child for example or a kid, you can go to a teacher or to an adult to seek help. You can also try to reach your primary care doctor or a counselor. You can also go to the emergency room that's the closest to you as well. You could go to your employee assistance program wherever you work. So always try to see who it is that you can go to and these are just some options available. I hope these three tips help you in making a good decision about how to help your loved one whether it's a family member, a friend or other people needing some help.

For help and resources visit 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988lifeline.org, call 988 or text HOME to 741741. Crisis counselors are available 24/7.

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