



Mental Health

By Assistant Director of Educational Justice Dr. Jen Sahr

Connecting with Loved Ones

September is National Suicide Prevention Month: a moment in time in which Fargo Public Schools and the community can rally the public to create awareness of this leading cause of death, and inspire more and more people to learn how they can play a role in their communities in helping to save lives.

If someone you know is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, connecting with them can be the difference in getting them the help they need. Talking to a loved one about mental health and suicide can be an uncomfortable and uncertain topic but it is also one of the best ways to prevent it. We can all take action to have these conversations with someone who may be suicidal by using the five action steps from [#BeThe1To](#).

Ask.

- **How:** Asking “Are you thinking about suicide?” shows that you are willing to discuss suicide in a nonjudgmental and supportive manner. The other important part of this step is to listen to their reasons for their emotional pain as well as the reasons that they want to continue to live. Help them focus on *their* reasons for living, not on the reasons that you think they should stay alive.
- **Why:** Findings suggest that acknowledging and talking about suicide may reduce suicidal ideation.

Be there.

- **How:** Be physically present for someone, speak with them on the phone when you can, or show up in any other way that demonstrates support for the person at risk. If you are unwilling or unable to commit to being there, talk with them to develop ideas on who might else be able to help and how they might support.
- **Why:** Increasing someone’s connectedness to others and limiting their isolation has shown to be a protective factor against suicide.

Help Keep them Safe.

- **How:** After the “Ask” step, and you’ve determined suicide is indeed being talked about, it is important to find out a few things to establish immediate safety. The first question will be to ensure that they have not done something already to hurt themselves. Secondly, you will want to ask them if they have a plan and a way to die by suicide.



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- **Why:** Knowing the answers to each of these questions can tell us about the imminence and severity of danger the person is in.

Help them connect.

- **How:** One way to start helping them find ways to connect is to work with them to develop a [safety plan](#). A safety plan is designed to guide people through a crisis, with a goal to keep them safe and get them help.
- **Why:** Connected people are significantly less likely to feel depressed, suicidal, and overwhelmed, while also feeling more hopeful.

Follow Up

- **How:** Make sure to follow up with them to see how they're doing. Leave a message, send a text, or give them a call. This is a great time to see if there is anything else that you can do to support them.
- **Why:** This type of contact can continue to increase their feelings of connectedness and share your ongoing support. There is evidence that even a simple form of reaching out, like sending a caring postcard, can potentially reduce their risk for suicide.

Check in on your friends and family. Connecting with them is one of the best things that we can do to get them through difficult times. However, it can sometimes feel uncomfortable, daunting, or just plain awkward. [The Roadmap to Friends Supporting Friends](#) gives ideas on what support can look like, how to offer support, and where to begin.

If someone you know is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, you matter and can be the difference in getting them the help that they need. The [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) has resources on what to look for and how you can help them. School counselors, social workers, and psychologists are available to support Fargo Public Schools students who are struggling emotionally or support is available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by calling 9-8-8 or using the [online chat](#) feature.

