

Suicide Intervention Policy

During the course of our ministry there are times when someone you talk with is very despondent and says thing like "life is not worth living", "I can't go on" or actually says "I am thinking about suicide." Please read and keep this in a place where you can access it easily.

If a suicide threat is made during a group time, the leader should bring the person to the pastor or to the ministry leader, immediately after assessing if the threat is real. If you cannot leave the group, then send someone to get the pastor or the ministry leader.

In all circumstances, if you cannot get them help immediately or they attempt to leave, try to get their phone number and/or address. Try to keep them with you until help arrives.

If you assess that the threat is not real, you can still follow through with a referral to a crisis hotline or a counseling center.

How to assess if the suicide threat is real:

- Ø Ask them right up front, "Are you considering taking your life?" Do not fear that you are planting the seeds of suicide in their mind.
- Ø Do they have the means to carry out their threat, i.e. pills, gun, etc.?
- Ø Do they have access to the means to carry out the threat?
- Ø Have they ever attempted to commit suicide in the past? It does not matter if the attempt seemed weak or not.
- Ø Do they have a support system, family members, small group? If NOT, the threat is more dangerous.
- Ø Do they appear to be saying goodbye to people? Once someone decides to take their life, they tend to have a sense of peace because the struggle over the decision to take their life has been made.

We want to take all threats of suicide seriously, but must be careful in how we assess them as well. Try to determine if the person is reaching out because of loneliness, feeling overwhelmed, or fear. Many times people will make statements of wanting to "end it all" because they really want to be connected and have not found a way to do that yet. We want to be especially sensitive to newcomers and members who have not been attending very long.