

Leading through Suicide

Podcast interview with Joe Slabaugh & Pastors Ronnie & Nick
 Relevant Community Church – Elkhorn Nebraska
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Clinical depression versus being suicidal.

Clinical depression can portray itself in a sad, irritable mood, but being suicidal goes beyond clinical depression; the person sees no options or path to the future.

What are some signs of those struggling with suicidal thoughts?

- Primarily hopelessness.
- Progressively losing hope, manifesting itself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Excessive/increased substance abuse, feelings of no purpose, anxiety, agitation, rage, reckless activities, dramatic mood swings, giving away stuff, writing letters or texts.
- Those who knew a suicide victim are more likely to be suicidal themselves, called *contagion*.

Identifying those who are suicidal.

To identify those who really are suicidal, it's important that we normalize conversations about suicide. Through conversations, we can create safe places to share feelings of depression, anxiety, hopelessness. It's OK, and most effective, to directly ask someone questions about suicide. And don't let that person's answer lie about the reality of their mental state. Pursue it by asking them questions. In these conversations, we need to assess severity by asking questions:

- *Are you suicidal? Have you ever been suicidal?*
- *When was the last time you thought about suicide? How long have you been thinking about suicide?*
- *Do you have thoughts, are you preparing, or have you planned?*
- *Have you attempted before? When and How?*

Determining the best level of care for a person.

During the identifying conversation with a person, if red flags are going up based upon their answers to the questions, determine best next level of care. Never guarantee confidentiality when it comes to suicidal ideation. Privacy can be enforced with other less critical mental health issues. We are all mandatory reporters, no matter what the age.

A 3-tiered approach to care:

1. **Relational Help:** a spouse, a friend, a mom or dad, etc. People are more likely to open up and seek help from a close relationship with someone they know. If the person is a minor (under 19 years), we have an obligation to contact parents.
2. **Community Help:** That person's community, church for example.
3. **Professional Help:** Ask if you can make a phone call together to set an appointment. In extreme situations, the person needs to be placed on a 'psychiatric hold' for 24-72 hours. Those who would classify as extreme or at severe risk are those who 1) *Are thinking about it,* 2) *Are making preparations,* 3) *Have a plan*

Facilities with psychiatric hold capabilities (for extreme situations):

- CHI Health - Omaha
- Immanuel Hospital - Omaha
- Lasting Hope- Omaha
- Boys Town - Omaha
- Med Center - Omaha
- Jenny Edmundson – Council Bluffs

Crisis Lines to connect a suicidal person to (do this together):

- Boystown National Hotline 800-448-3000 or Text VOICE to 20121
- Teen hope line 800-394-HOPE
- National Suicide Hotline/Lifeline call or text 988 or 800-273-TALK (8255).

Other Resources for those who may be struggling but not yet suicidal.

- www.relevantcommunity.org/care
- www.citycarecounseling.org
- www.freshhope.us

For those left behind after a suicide,

- It is our job as leaders to help them navigate through their pain or connect them to a resource or community who can walk alongside them during this time.
- Be empathetic with those hurting, just be there.
- We don't need to have all the answers, just be there so they know we care.

Faith based common question about suicide and salvation.

A question often asked in the faith community concerns the salvation of those who take their own life. Suicide is not an unforgivable sin. John 10:28 guarantees us eternal life, redeemed, restored. Jesus said, *²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

Additionally, Paul in Romans 8:31-39 also guarantees that there isn't anything that can separate Christ followers from the love of God. He says, *³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[b] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
