

Suicide Prevention

QUICK REFERENCE COUNSELING KEYS Excerpt

Compassion for Your Concerns . . .

Does life seem impossible? Have you been struggling with thoughts of suicide? Could you possibly have begun to believe a lie? The lie is that “self-inflicted death is better than God-given life.” The Lord has compassion for your every concern and will deal with you only in truth. Jesus said,

*“You will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.”
(John 8:32)*

Fables about Suicide¹

- **Fable:** “People who talk about killing themselves never do.”

Fact: Take any threat of suicide seriously. Of those who take their own lives, 80 percent have warned someone.

*“An intelligent heart acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”
(Proverbs 18:15)*

- **Fable:** “Never talk about suicide with deeply depressed people—it could give them ideas.”

Fact: You can assume that most depressed or very anxious persons have given some thought to taking their lives. For a person considering suicide, having someone to talk with can be a powerful preventive.

*“The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of
speech increases persuasiveness.”
(Proverbs 16:21)*

- **Fable:** “A deeply committed believer would never commit suicide.”

Fact: The hopelessness that can accompany severe stress can also strain a person’s faith. Like the godly prophet Jeremiah, even the most sincere believer can become engulfed in suicidal despair. When he was being tormented and his life was threatened, Jeremiah lamented,

*“Cursed be the day on which I was born! The
day when my mother bore me, let it not
be blessed! . . . Why did I come out from
the womb to see toil and sorrow, and
spend my days in shame?”
(Jeremiah 20:14, 18)*

Do's and Don'ts . . . for Family and Friends²

- **Don't** trivialize talk of death with, "Quit talking that way."
Do . . . Be willing to listen—really listen. "I want to hear what is really going on in your heart and life."
- **Don't** promise, "I will never mention this to anyone."
Do . . . Explain, "Because I care, I can't be sworn to secrecy. I love you too much."
- **Don't** blame something or someone else. "It's his fault that you feel this way."
Do . . . Realize that God knows the injustices, yet we all choose how we respond. Will we act responsibly or react irresponsibly?
- **Don't** offer quick solutions. "Just put the past behind you."
Do . . . Help initiate medical evaluation as soon as possible.
- **Don't** get into theological arguments.
Do . . . Earnestly pray for wisdom for every person involved and give assurance, "God will never leave you or forsake you."

*"There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."
(Proverbs 12:18)*

Seven Scriptural Reasons to Say No to Suicide³

1. Suicide rejects God's offer of inner peace. (Philippians 4:6–7)
2. Suicide rejects God's sovereignty over the length of your life. (Psalm 139:13, 16)
3. Suicide rejects God's right to be Lord over your life. (1 Corinthians 6:19)
4. Suicide rejects God's commandment not to murder. (Deuteronomy 5:17)
5. Suicide rejects God's ability to heal your hurts. (Jeremiah 17:14)
6. Suicide rejects God's plan to give you hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)
7. Suicide rejects God's power already within you as a Christian to make you godly. (2 Peter 1:3–4)

Key Verses to Memorize

*"For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken."
(Psalm 62:5–6)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Lamentations 3:19–24

Comfort for the Aftermath

The emotional fallout from suicide is more devastating than you can imagine. Even when suicide strikes within our own boundary of relationships, most of us fear we are inadequate to face the reality of such a tragedy!

A Grief Like No Other⁴

- **Shock**— "This is a mistake. I saw her just a few hours ago."
- **Rejection**— "He thought death would be better than living with me!"
- **Guilt**— "I should have done something to prevent this."
- **Anger**— "How could she do this to me?"
- **Sadness**— "I keep dreaming I'll get to be with him again."

Be a Friend Like No Other⁵

- **Be present**— Be willing to just "be there."
- **Be listening**— Hear the heart and encourage the survivor to express feelings.
- **Be accepting**— Accept all the emotions, no matter how offensive the feelings may seem.
- **Be forgiving**— Let survivors see vulnerability and forgiveness in your life.
- **Be prayerful**— Offer to pray if the survivor seems receptive.

*"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."
(Psalm 34:18)*

Giving Hope to the Hopeless

Honestly confront. (Proverbs 20:5)

- Take all talk of death and suicide seriously.
- Ask the direct question, “Are you thinking about suicide?”
- Express your concern.

Offer options. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

- Acknowledge the fact that life is hard.
- Point out that choices in life often consist of unpleasant possibilities.
- List possible options on a sheet of paper.

Present a contract.⁶ (Galatians 6:2)

- Build a relationship by showing your care and willingness to help.
- Ask if the person would be willing to make a contract with you:
“Will you promise that if you are considering harming yourself, you will call me before doing anything?”
- Be sure to obtain a signature.

Enlist help.⁷ (Proverbs 15:22)

- Seek a trained counselor or therapist.
- Call a minister.

Related Topics . . .

- Depression:
Walking from Darkness into the Dawn
- Euthanasia:
The Myth of Mercy Killing
- Guilt:
Living Guilt Free
- Hope:
The Anchor of the Soul
- Rejection:
Healing a Wounded Heart

1. See John H. Hewett, *After Suicide*, Christian Care Books, ed. Wayne E. Oates (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1980), 23, 27; Paul D. Meier, Frank B. Minirth, and Frank B. Wichern, *Introduction to Psychology and Counseling: Christian Perspectives and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 259; John White, *The Masks of Melancholy: A Christian Physician Looks at Depression & Suicide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982), 164, 167; H. Norman Wright, *Crisis Counseling: What to Do and Say During the First 72 Hours*, Updated and expanded ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993), 101.
2. See Kay Marshall Strom, *Helping Women in Crisis: A Handbook for People Helpers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 120–22; Bill Blackburn, *What You Should Know About Suicide* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 90.
3. See Rus Walton, *Biblical Solutions to Contemporary Problems* (Bentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988), 305–7; Henri Blocher, *Suicide*, trans. Roger Van Dyk (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 14–5, 20; John Stevens, *Suicide: An Illicit Lover* (Denver, CO: Heritage House, 1976), 41–44.
4. Blackburn, *Suicide*, 100–14; Hewett, *After Suicide*, 32–33, 34–47; Christopher Lukas and Henry M. Seiden, *Silent Grief: Living in the Wake of Suicide* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 30–40.
5. Hewett, *After Suicide*, 61–63; Lukas and Seiden, *Silent Grief*, 145–52.
6. Blackburn, *Suicide*, 82, 87–88, 96–99.
7. Blackburn, *Suicide*, 90–96.

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Suicide Prevention:
Hope When Life Seems Hopeless.

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).



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