



The Simple Church | Suicide Awareness Conversation Guide

Conversations around mental health can be difficult to navigate. As our church continues to teach and resource our people around these subjects, one particularly heavy conversation you may have with someone is around the topic of suicide. Unfortunately, in our culture, suicide rates have risen drastically in the last few years. Because of this, we want you to be as resourced as possible should you find yourself in a conversation with someone that you suspect or who overtly informs you that they may attempt to take their own life.

Ultimately, if you interact with someone who is considering suicide, your goals should be to listen to them and connect them with a pastor who can help them navigate this time and next steps. A helpful strategy to employ for this interaction is called QPR, which stands for Question, Persuade, Refer. QPR is meant to be thought of like CPR. You don't have to be a doctor to perform CPR, but you could be the key interaction that will save someone's life while you help connect them with appropriate individuals. While there is no standardized solution that we can institute, below are some best practices to be aware of for our church leadership team.

Question

The first step in having this conversation is **identifying whether or not someone is considering suicide**. The simple and best way to do this is to **be direct**. Don't be afraid to say the word "suicide."

- You cannot put the idea of suicide into someone's mind. They are either thinking about it or not.

If in doubt, don't wait. Ask the question.

Listen. Don't underestimate the power that listening has to restore hope in someone's life.

Be persistent, not pushy. Allow the person to talk freely and listen for statements such as:

- "I just wish I wouldn't wake up."
- "I don't want to be here; I want to sleep and not wake up."
- "I'm tired of fighting."

Sometimes people simply need to be heard, and their pain validated and have no intent on harming themselves. However, when such statements are made, you can state/ask, "I hear you say you are hurting and tired of fighting. Do you feel like you will hurt yourself or commit suicide?"

Persuade

If you identify someone who wants to attempt suicide, your next step should be to **convince them to receive help**. This starts with listening to the problem and giving them your full attention.

Your goal is to offer hope in any form.

This step should include securing their cooperation in seeking a solution. For instance, "Will you go with me to get help?"; "Will you let me help you get help?"; "Will you speak with a pastor?"

Should the person be an immediate threat to themselves, you can state, "Because I do care for you, I'm calling 911." Please be aware that contacting 911 may be the best thing you can do to help someone, even if you feel uneasy about it or it upsets the person in crisis.

Use “we” language as you help:

- “I want you to live; we will get through this.”
- “Sounds like that isn’t working... let’s try something else.”

As church leaders, I would heavily encourage you to share God’s word with them appropriately. In offering scripture and God’s truths, we want to be sure what we offer does not illicit shame. A few scriptures that may be helpful are the following:

- **Psalm 34:18:** The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
- **Psalm 139:13–14:** For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
- **Matthew 11:28** – Come to me all who are weary, and I will give you rest.
- **Exodus 14:14** – The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.

Refer

Your ultimate goal is to connect them with a mental health professional who can help. We have a pastoral care process in place that is designed to do just this. The best way to initiate this is to reach out to a Care Pastor at bryan@thesimplechurch.tv or care@thesimplechurch.tv .

However, in an emergency, please immediately **contact either 988 or 911 emergency response**. Some helpful things to know about these calls:

- **988** and **911** are the same center; however, 988 connects you immediately with the mental health specialists.
- Calling these lines will connect you with a qualified professional who will be able to talk to anyone considering suicide. **Calling this line does not mean that they will automatically dispatch emergency response.** It is perfectly normal to simply call and have a conversation.
- It is common, if the person you are talking to is willing, to call these lines on speaker with them. This can help them feel at ease.

Remember, no two of these conversations will be the same, and you are not expected to have all the answers. However, you can be a part of the solution that makes a difference in someone’s life. For further resources that are available, please take some time to review thesimplechurch.tv/care.