

# Caring for youth with suicidal thinking



## An approach that works: You want to be CALM.

<b>C</b>	Cooperate	<b>Work together with them</b> and be with them in their distress, rather than pulling or pushing them to do something.
<b>A</b>	Accept	<b>Be non-judgmental</b> for suicidal thinking often comes with guilt, self-criticism and judgment, and any further judgment will make this much worse.
<b>L</b>	Listen	<b>Listen more than speak</b> and resist advice giving, which can make young people feel judged, scolded, and unheard. Ask, don't tell.
<b>M</b>	Mirror	<b>Validate and acknowledge</b> because this is the most common thing youth who have had suicidal thinking have told us they wanted when they reached out.

## An organized, CALM approach will allow the youth to:

- Feel safe enough to talk to you again if they need to
- Open up about their true thoughts and feelings
- Accept help if you can offer it

HELPFUL	UNHELPFUL
Cooperative	Not Cooperative
“What would you like to do next?”	“OK here’s what we’re going to do..”
“Is there anything you need right now?”	“You need to get off of social media right now.”
“I’m here with you.”	“You need to..”
Accepting	Not Accepting
“I believe you and thank you for telling me.”	“You can’t be! You have everything you need.”
“I understand why you’re worried about them.”	“Your friends are such a bad influence.”
“I care about you, the you that you are.”	“It’s just a phase, you’re not really..”
Listening	Not Listening
“Do you notice anything that makes it worse?”	“You need to just let go of things.”
“Do you notice anything that makes it better?”	“You need more exercise.”
“Tell me more, if you’d like?”	“I can’t listen to this.”
Mirroring	Not Mirroring
“That must be really upsetting.”	“But what they say doesn’t matter!”
“They’re really important to you, and it hurts.”	“They’re bad for you, you should ignore it.”
“It really sounds like you’re so overwhelmed.”	“You’re stronger than this.”

## Important things to remember:

1. Privacy and dignity matter to young people – safe space, safe time, non-judgmental language
2. Your response will really matter, so consider your responses carefully
3. Suicide is scary to think about *and* scary to hear about – you both may have strong emotions
4. Safety comes first: if at any point you believe that the danger of the situation is severe, you must call 9-1-1 or immediately go to an emergency department
5. Most youth who experience suicidal thinking do not die by suicide (less than 99%)