

## How to Help an Online Suicidal Person

"I am done. I'm taking all my pills tonight."

"No one will even notice I'm gone."

"Suicide is my only option."

If you've ever been in a chat room or reading someone's post, tweet or status and have seen comments like these, it can be scary. You might feel helpless. You don't know **HOW** to help them because you don't really know -- **WHO** they are -- **WHAT** their real name is - **WHERE** they live. You simply can't identify them.

Believe, listen, and encourage, but know that you are not responsible for any suicidal actions they take. The following ideas can guide you with what to say/not say to an online suicidal person and how to contact some of the most widely used online sites so that they can provide support to their user too!

**BELIEVE AND ACKNOWLEDGE:** If someone tells you they are having thoughts of ending their life, believe them. Don't say, "You could never do that," or "Come on you're messing with me." They might just say back, "You're right," and never bring up the subject again. But...deep down those feelings are still trapped inside of them and they might think that person didn't believe what they said. Let them know you believe them, but you are worried about them. Tell them they need to tell someone they trust, so they don't make a decision they can never get back.

**LISTEN AND VALIDATE:** One reason someone has suicidal thoughts is that they don't have support and feel like no one is listening. So really listen. Think of it this way – someone makes a comment -- say the same thing but use different words. If someone says, "No one will even notice I'm gone," you can say, "So you feel like everyone ignores you?" It stinks when you feel like no one listens to you. Let the person know they are being heard. Let them vent. Don't interrupt them. In person, you can shake your head. Your body language can help you to express understanding or genuine concern. Online, many times, all you have is your written word. Statements like, "I see," "I'm listening," or "OK" can give them validation of their feelings.

**ENCOURAGE AND INFORM:** A suicidal person needs to know that there is hope. Encourage them to reach out for help. Say something like, "You opened up here, now walk upstairs and tell your parent." Sometimes people feel safer through a computer screen. They will say they want to end their life to a faceless person or on their Twitter account, but they won't tell their school counselor, own mom, or best friend. Tell the person that it takes strength speak out.

OK – You've taken 3 steps to help someone in need, now contact the website help or safety link to alert them of the suicidal user. They too will offer a supportive voice of concern and/or offer some crisis line referrals to follow up with. You cannot fix the person. You also cannot control what he or she does going forward, but you might be the first person who believed, listened, and encouraged. You did the right thing!

The following are links to report suicidal concern to some of the most popular teen websites. Hold down the control button and click your mouse to go directly to a reporting page:

### Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/help/594991777257121/>

### Twitter

<https://support.twitter.com/articles/20170313>

### Tumblr

[https://www.tumblr.com/docs/en/counseling\\_prevention\\_resources](https://www.tumblr.com/docs/en/counseling_prevention_resources)

### Instagram

<https://help.instagram.com/388741744585878>

### SnapChat

<https://www.snapchat.com/safety>