

## FIRST AID COUNSEL FOR A SUICIDAL FRIEND

Some people are concerned to bring up suicide because they do not want to plant self-destructive ideas in the mind of a despondent person. The risk of silence, however, far outweighs the risk of asking. Whenever you are speaking to an individual who sounds hopeless—one of the key predictors of suicide—always ask them directly, “Have you thought about suicide?” If the answer is yes or *maybe* – take it seriously. There is no need to panic, the person is speaking with you, so they want help and are presently safe. Your primary objectives in this conversation are to gain a commitment from the person not to kill him/herself, ensure that he/she has responsible accountability, and to provide hope.

### Key Questions:

1. Have you considered committing suicide?
2. Do you have a plan for how you would take your life? (*Bullet A*)
3. Do you have access to the things necessary to accomplish your plan? (*Bullet B*)
4. Have you begun saying good-byes, written a fair-well letter, or give things away? (*Bullet C*)
5. What purpose would your death serve (to punish someone, relief from pain, get attention)?
6. Has a close family member or friend committed suicide? (*Bullet D*)
7. When are you going to be alone in the coming days/weeks?
8. Do you plan to use drugs/alcohol any time soon? (This heightens emotions and impairs judgment.)
9. Who in your life can serve as caring support, accountability and encouragement?
10. What obstacle would you need to overcome in order for life to be worth living?

### Warning Signs/Special Considerations:

- A. A person who has a plan is much more likely to actually commit suicide than someone who is merely thinking about it, though both should be taken seriously. The lethality of their method of choice also raises the degree of action to be taken.
- B. When the person speaks of a specific means (“with the gun in my dresser drawer” or “off of the 5th Street Bridge”) their threat should be treated as an absolute fact. This means calling law enforcement and ensuring 24 hour a day supervision.
- C. A more cheerful attitude is not necessarily a sign of improvement. Often after the person has finalized their plan to kill him/herself they are relieved that a decision has been made. Again the best procedure is to ask direct questions and maintain supervision.
- D. Having a close family member or friend who has committed suicide removes much of the taboo from the act. A person who has been through the process before may not be as frightened by the idea of suicide.
- E. If you have any doubt whatsoever, be sure to have the person to sign the life contract (see attached). Allow the person to hold on to your hope in the interim until they can see that there is reason to live. Let them know you care too much to let them die.

### Biblical Hope/Action:

**Job 3** – The Bible speaks vividly of the emotions and thoughts you are experiencing. God is not ignorant of these matters. He cares enough to give you words for these dark times (see also Psalm 44:9-26 and 88).

**Psalms 23:4** – The believer can be certain of God’s presence in the darkest times.

**I Corinthians 10:13** – God promise give you a reason to HOPE! There is a way out of your circumstances besides suicide. God promises to give you the ability to endure this hardship.

### Taking the Next Step:

Having this in your hands means you are taking an important step. You are seeking help. In order to follow through with that help you will need to call The Summit Church office at (919) 383-7100 to set up an appointment with one of our counselors. Please visit our website at [www.summitrdu.com/counseling](http://www.summitrdu.com/counseling) and complete a copy of the “Standard Intake Forms.” We look forward to partnering with you and walking alongside you on this path of hope and healing.