

Commissioned Templar Chaplain Program
Unit 11, Part 1
Suicide Prevention and Intervention

Among the many forms of sickness and distress in this world is suicide and there may be more of them than you think. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website states that almost 46,000 Americans committed suicide in 2020 and it varies by age group, socio-economic factors and more. Suicide is both a mental and physical problem found inside and outside Freemasonry.

The purpose of this lesson is to impart information about prevention and intervention. First off though, please know that I am not professionally trained in this matter and neither are many of you. Thus, my objective is to present general information and to emphasize the importance of seeking professional assistance.

To that end, fix the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, website, <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/> in your mind. Share it with others and call or text 988 as necessary. Telephone and text number 988 is manned around the clock by professionals. Not only are they a ready source of help for those contemplating suicide, but they offer assistance to people like us, who aren't well versed in this matter. From our standpoint though, quietly listening and speaking softly are very helpful in times of trouble. Never forget that.

Let's go over a few things from the website. At the top of the homepage we see "If someone you know is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, you can be the difference in getting them the help they need. It's important to take

care of yourself when you are supporting someone through a difficult time, as this may stir up difficult emotions. If it does, please reach out for support yourself.”

Fred says, call 988.

I interpret this as be careful. Do your best, but don't become a casualty yourself. There are physical and mental risks; and, certainly legal hazards for you the helper, in our litigious society. In fact, we are taught in the Grand Encampment's Commissioned Templar Chaplain Program, never to enter anyone's home by yourself and even having someone with you when visiting a living facility is recommended. Of course helping a suicidal family member might be different. Fred says, call 988.

Next the website poses the question “Do They Need Your Help?” Maybe/ maybe not. Most of us aren't professionals and we mustn't pretend to be in these life and death situations. Thus the following from the website may be useful.

“Some warning signs may help you determine if a loved one is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss, or change. If you or someone you know exhibits any of these, seek help by calling the Lifeline.

- **Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves**
- **Looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun**
- **Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live**
- **Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain**

- **Talking about being a burden to others**
- **Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs**
- **Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly**
- **Sleeping too little or too much**
- **Withdrawing or isolating themselves**
- **Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge**
- **Extreme mood swings.”**

Next on the website we see “How Can You Help Them?” Here I stress that getting them with a professional is best. We can help with basic guidance and hopefully avert tragedy, but ours will not be long term care. Don’t make promises you can’t or won’t keep. Especially when dealing with someone in this state of mind.

The website cautions, “It can be scary when a friend or loved one is thinking about suicide. It's hard to know how a suicidal crisis feels and how to act. Call 988 at any time for help if a friend is struggling.”

It continues with “Use The Do’s and Don’ts. Talking with and finding help for someone that may be suicidal can be difficult. Here are tips that may help.

- **Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.**
- **Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.**
- **Be non-judgmental. Don’t debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don’t lecture on the value of life.**
- **Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.**

- **Don't dare him or her to do it.**
- **Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.**
- **Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.**
- **Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.**
- **Take action. Remove means, like weapons or pills.**
- **Get help from people or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.” Fred says, call 988.**

I have carefully tried to present the foregoing as verbatim from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, website, because I think it best to let the professionals speak, but I have done little more than broaching the topic.

Hereon the lesson will be self study. Go to the website, <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/> and peruse it entirety. My objective is to familiarize you with the information and to make you comfortable with the website. I'm sort of cutting out the middle man. Please take it to heart so that you may assist others, both with by teaching and certainly helping your fellow man in times of crisis. I recommend you open these internal links first:

- **Be Aware of Suicidal Feelings.**
- **Use the 5 Action Steps.**
- **Practice Active Listening.**
- **Get More Info.**

Now I'll ask a few questions to see if you retained any of this vital information.

- 1. Are you professionally trained in suicide prevention and intervention?**
- 2. Have you heard of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website?**
- 3. Name one of the suicide warning signs.**
- 4. What's one of the first links you'll open on the website?**
- 5. What does Fred say?**

In conclusion, we may encounter suicidal people, even ourselves, when we don't expect it. They may be family, Freemasons or total strangers. Having a working knowledge of suicide prevention and intervention may make the difference between life and death. I view it similar to First Aid of a physical nature until professional help takes over. Fred says, call 988.

Courteously,
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