

# When You Need **HELP**

## Emergency Numbers

CUMC Public Safety (212) 305-8100

NYPD 911 or  
(212) 927-3200

CUMC Mental Health Service (212) 305-3400

Lifenet (800) 273-TALK  
(800) 273-8255

National Hopeline Network (800) SUICIDE  
(800) 784-2433

## Student Support Services

CUMC Mental Health Service (212) 305-3400  
Burton Lerner, M.D.

Student Health Service (212) 305-3400  
Polly Wheat, M.D.

Pastoral Counseling (212) 305-3989  
Rev. Daniel Morrissey, O.P., S.T.L.

Center for Student Wellness (212) 304-5564  
William Kernan, Ed.D.

AI:MS Program (212) 305-3989  
(Addiction Illness: Medical Solutions)  
Daniel Morrissey, M.A., Ph.L.

More information about suicide and  
suicide prevention can be found online  
at [www.cumc.columbia.edu/students/wellness/suicide.html](http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/students/wellness/suicide.html)

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To schedule a suicide awareness and  
prevention training for a group,  
call 212-304-5564.



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Student Health Service  
60 Haven Avenue, Ground Floor  
(212) 305-3400  
[www.cumc.columbia.edu/student/health](http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/student/health)



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## Understanding Suicide:

# What Are **THEY** Feeling?

and

# What Can **YOU** Do?



*Discover. Educate. Care. Lead.*

Helping someone who is depressed and possibly at risk for suicide is an involved process.

Understanding the situation and where to turn for help are the first steps in finding a resolution.

Outlined in this brochure are some guidelines, not just about the person at risk, but also your role.

Remember, you are not alone; there are trained CUMC professionals ready to help.

## What are they **FEELING**?

Students who are depressed and possibly at risk for suicide may feel any of the following feelings:

- √ Lonely
- √ Isolated
- √ Depressed
- √ Desperate
- √ Trapped
- √ Hopeless
- √ Highly anxious

## What are they **SAYING**?

It is important to listen well, listen actively, and reflect on what you have heard. Below are some sentiments that someone who is depressed and at risk for hurting themselves may say. This list is not all encompassing and you can expect to hear variations on the themes of their feelings.

- √ No one understands what I am feeling.
- √ No one would miss me.
- √ It's the only way to solve my problems.
- √ I want to end my life/commit suicide.
- √ I want to hurt others.

## What are they **DOING**?

At times, students who are depressed and at risk may not be able to verbalize their feelings. Some may and some may not. Regardless, behaviors to watch out for include:

- √ Acting erratically.
- √ Dramatic change in mood.
- √ Putting affairs in order. (e.g. giving away prized possessions)
- √ Missing classes.
- √ Engaging in high-risk behavior. (e.g. smoking/drinking excessively)
- √ Crying excessively for no apparent reason.
- √ Not taking care of themselves as seen in poor hygiene.
- √ Making a plan for suicide.

## What are **YOU** feeling?

As a caring person in whom someone has chosen to confide, you could feel a host of the feelings below, all of which are normal, and all of which can influence your response.

- √ You may feel like you can't help.
- √ You may feel scared and overwhelmed.
- √ You may feel like you want to take this situation on as a helper since they came to you.
- √ You may feel unsafe.
- √ You may feel uncomfortable.
- √ You may feel something unsettling in your gut that you can't describe. You must trust that!

## What can **YOU** say?

You may believe that talking about suicide or someone's feelings of despair may "push someone over the edge." That is, however, a myth. Often the best solution to engaging someone who is distressed is to use your active listening skills, reflecting what you have heard, and validating what they have said. What you could say:

- √ You cannot promise confidentiality. You can guarantee that only those who need to know will.
- √ You can validate their feelings.
- √ You *can* ask if they thought of hurting themselves in any way. And if so, how?
- √ You can offer support and help them identify people in whom they can confide and who can support them.

## What can **YOU** do?

The risk of NOT taking action far outweighs the risk of taking action. Below are some steps you can take for a distressed person, and for yourself.

- √ You can refer them to a support resource.
- √ You can call for help.
- √ You can walk them to the emergency room.