Suicidal ideation is often triggered by a negative life event, like the break-up of a relationship, job loss, or a traumatic experience. Stressors like a disaster, violence, homelessness, or poverty may make people who are already susceptible to depression all the more vulnerable. It is important to assess for suicidal ideation.

What can you do?

Provide assurance that such feelings are not uncommon when individuals feel overwhelmed. Provide the at-risk person with some hope or assurance that things are gradually going to get better each day. If a person acknowledges suicidal ideation and a plan, it will be important to reassure them that you want to work with them to help keep them safe. If they have a plan that involves a weapon, ask them if there is someone who they can give the weapon to until they feel safe.

Resources

If you think someone you know may be feeling suicidal, you should directly ask them. You will NOT be putting the idea in their head. If anyone you know has a plan to hurt themselves and the means to do it, and cannot make a plan with you to stay safe, try to get them to a counselor or call 911 immediately. For more information contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or visit http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/. Veterans and family members can press “1” to reach the VA Veteran Crisis Line to speak with a crisis intervention responder who is also a Veteran.