

The Top-Ten Things **to**  
**NEVER Say to a** Suicidal  
Person

#10

*“You need to just snap out of it!”  
Pick yourself up and go on! If I were  
you, I’d just forget about it and get  
on with my life!”*

## Response

*Try this. Stand up. Bend over. Grab your boots or shoes. Now pick yourself up off the floor and carry yourself across the room.*

*What? Can't do it? Can't defy gravity?*

*Neither can a clinically-depressed client, whose problems seem to massive to handle; too heavy to bear. Also, to "forget about it" may foster secrecy and shame, and perpetuate an abusive situation.*

#9

*“You shouldn’t feel like that! Trust me. You’ll feel better tomorrow.”*

## Response

*One of the most precious gifts we can give to a person in crisis is permission to feel.*

*Don't rob the suffering person of that gift. Oh, and by the way...when things DON'T feel better or get better tomorrow, you'll have lost credibility with him/her.*

#8

*“Is that all that’s bothering you?  
That’s nothing! Lots of people  
have problems worse than  
yours.”*

## Response

*Oh, great. Make their crisis seem trivial. It may not seem big to you, but it seems enormous to the suffering person who, at least temporarily, lacks the tools to deal with their problem.*

#7

*“I hope you’re not thinking about hurting yourself. Are you? That would be a stupid thing to do.”*

*(NOTE: This is VERY different than asking “Have you been thinking about suicide?”)*



## Response

*No one wants to, or likes, feeling stupid. This type of statement makes the suffering person feel hesitant to share. To stunt their willingness to talk about their problem multiplies the odds that they will choose suicide.*

#6

*“Don’t say that! I’m sure your  
parents love you very much!”*

## Response

*Make sure you have your facts straight before saying something like this. Sometimes we don't know what's really going on in the child's home.*

*And besides...love is possibly not being expressed in a way that is meaningful to the suffering person who is depressed. And, "Don't say that!" isn't the best way to get the person to talk to you.*

#5

*“If I were you, I’d \_\_\_\_\_.”*

## Response

*You're not. And you don't have all the facts.*

#4

*“If you are wanting to get attention,  
you are certainly going about it the  
wrong (or right) way!”*

## Response

*To assume that a “cry for help” is merely an attention-attracting tactic can be a deadly mistake. Suicidal people are angry. In fact, depression itself is often described as “anger turned inward.”*

*They might just do it after hearing something like that. And remember, it’s a documented fact that most people who commit suicide, committed preceding suicidal gestures or attempts.*

#3

*“You ought to be able to think of a better way to deal with this than suicide. Why haven’t you tried \_\_\_\_\_?”*



## Response

*You might as well just go hang a “dummy” sign around their neck and get it over with. “Ought” needs to be thrown in the dumpster...along with “should” and “why.”*

#2

*“If you really want to slash your wrists, and do it right, you should do it vertically instead of horizontally.”*

## Response

*I can't believe people say stuff like this, but they do. Let's see....why wouldn't I want to give a suicidal person a "how to" lesson.  
HmMMM. Let me think.*

*And now.....for the NUMBER ONE  
thing to NEVER say to a suicidal  
person.....*

#1

*“Cheer up! You have your whole life ahead of you!”*

## Response

*If they are in misery, and see no end in (other than suicide), you've just told them they have a life sentence of pain until they stop breathing.*