

How You Can Help Prevent Suicide, Part 3

Note: This is Part 3 of a three-part series. Find Part 1 [here](#) and Part 2 [here](#).

I'll never forget the day I discovered my daughter was suicidal.

Paralyzed, shocked and overwhelmed with fear, I was at a loss to know what to do. I didn't think there was anything I could do other than keep a constant vigil. Have you been in my place or are you there now? Maybe it's not your child. The person of concern might be another family member, a friend or co-worker. I thought there was nothing I could do that would make any difference.

But I've learned that's not true.

There *is* something we can do.

It's not that hard, and it could give new hope.

It could save their life.

This blog is part of a series about suicide and a simple, easy-to-learn three-part strategy designed to help prevent death by suicide.

The process is called QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer.

QPR was developed by Dr. Paul Quinnett. You can read more on their website:

Today I'm addressing the third step, **Refer**. When you suspect your child or other loved one is suicidal, put together a list of resources.

Make a list of the help available in your area:

counselors/mental health providers, behavioral hospitals, the nearest hospital that accepts suicidal patients a suicide hotline number and so on. If you're not sure how to find these, call 211. They will help you find community information and referral services.

When you're prepared, you will have more peace of mind. Knowing where to turn for help provides a track to run on if and when you need it. You'll know who you're going to call, or where you're going to take your loved one *before* the need arises. This makes a huge difference in a crisis when you can't think clearly.

Three Guidelines

Dr. Quinnett says there are three general guidelines to follow when you refer someone for help.

1. The best referral is when you *personally take* the person you're worried about to a mental health provider or other professional.
2. The next best referral is when *the person agrees to see a professional and you know they actually went* to the appointment.
3. The third best referral is *getting the person to agree to accept help, even if it's in the future.*

The QPR Institute reports that most people who agree to get help usually keep their word and do it, however, due to shame and stigma, some won't. That's why it's strongly recommended to physically take the person to someone who can help them.

Some suicidal individuals want to talk to their own pastor/clergy or counselor, someone they know, rather than a stranger. You could offer to go with them.

Save this Number

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

They take calls any time, day or night, 365 days a year. Give the number to your child, too. Be sure they know it's a 24/7 number, including holidays.

It Takes 3 Things

It takes a lot of courage to apply QPR. According to Quinnett, we need to do three things to be brave enough.

- 1) Not worry about being disloyal.**
- 2) Not worry about breaking a trust.**
- 3) Not worry about having sufficient information for help.**

You're trying to save your loved one's life. At this point, these things don't matter.

When in doubt, take action. Don't wait! Do something! If you aren't sure, call the Suicide Lifeline number yourself and talk to a volunteer for guidance. It's better for your child to be mad at you and be alive, right? You don't want to have any regrets.

Immediately after using the three steps of QPR—Question, Persuade, Refer—it's recommended you broaden the safety net.

Broaden the Net

Ask "Who else would you like to know that you're feeling this bad?"

They may name a family member or friend. Ask for permission to call and let them know. Pull together a team of people who care about your loved one who will help build safety around them.

They should check on them regularly. My daughter, Renee, says a great question to ask is "How is your heart?" rather than "How are you feeling?"

Stay alert for warning signs (outlined in the first post of this series on 9/17). This could be done by a classmate, a friend, co-worker or roommate. It needs to be someone who sees them on a regular basis.

Never Lose Hope

Your child needs to know you care. You'll always be there for them, and you have hope for their future.

Isn't that what we all need in our dark times?

Hope is the key that can reduce the risk of suicide.

My family's hope comes from God. Where does yours come from?

Father of life, we look to You as we surrender our child or other loved one. Their life is in Your hands. Please give them hope—and give us hope, too. None of us can go on without it. Amen.

This Bible verse is hope-giving for me: "Be my rock of refuge to enter continually ... For You are my hope, O Lord God" (Ps. 71:3a, 5a).

Recommended book: *Dying to be Free: A Healing Guide for Families After a Suicide* by Beverly Cobain

***Has this series been helpful? Have you ever used QPR? How did it go? I'd love to hear your comments.*

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This article originally appeared at .