



# Solutions for Life

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**  
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## Facing a Tough Topic

The time has come. Today I'm going to address a topic many people are uncomfortable with. I generally try to keep this article easy to read and light - just your friendly neighborhood therapist offering some gentle, helpful advice. I've thought about writing on this topic before, and decided against it - too heavy, not sure anyone really wants to read about it. Today is the day I will find out, I guess.

It's time to talk about suicide. The act of ending one's own life is a topic that is not for sissies. I think what is driving this for me is Anthony Bourdain's suicide. I was truly devastated when I heard he had taken his life. I've watched the celebrity chef turned writer turned explorer and commentator on the world for many years. He was a fascinating person to me, and I watched his battles with addiction and depression as they played out on his TV shows (I can't help it - I pick up on stuff). I haven't watched him in the past couple of years, but I knew he had gotten married, had a child, gotten divorced, and was in a relationship with someone new. I breathed a sigh of relief when he had that child, thinking that the existence of this child might help him get healthy and stay that way. Apparently not.

I deal with suicide a lot in my practice. It's a question I ask all my new clients - "Have you thought about hurting or killing yourself recently?" Some are shocked by the question, and

others are clearly relieved to be able to tell someone. Below are some of the things I've learned about suicide:

**We've all thought about it.** We have all faced a time in our lives when we thought that not being here any longer might be the answer. When things are going so wrong, or we have one difficult event after another, or we are hurting so much, or nothing we do seems to turn out right - at some point, it is natural to think about exit strategies. So, you are normal.

**Thinking and planning are two very different things.** Vague thoughts are one thing. Deciding how you would carry the act out increases the likelihood of you following through with it. When someone has a specific plan, and has access to that plan, it is very serious and I am going to take action. I always tell my clients who are suicidal, "I can't help you if you are dead, so keeping you alive is our first order of business."

**You can't make someone do it.** Many people are afraid of broaching the topic of suicide, not wanting to push that person over the edge. You don't have to worry - you don't have that kind of power. Of course, I am assuming you are coming from a place of care and concern. So, ask the question. "Are you OK?" "You seem down, what's going on?" "I know you've had a lot going on; how are you coping with things?" "It sounds like you are

feeling overwhelmed; do you ever feel like just giving up?" "Are you thinking about hurting yourself?"

**No one really wants to die.** They just want the pain to stop. And they don't want to feel so alone. Unequivocally, when people who attempt suicide survive, they say as soon as they took the action they were hoping would kill them, they regretted it. But when people don't see a way out of the pain, and they feel as though no one cares, suicide becomes more and more attractive. This is why expressing concern and asking the direct questions is so helpful.

**What if it's me?** If you're the one considering suicide, please reach out. Friends, family, pastors, therapists all care and want to help. If those are not available to you, call 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK. There is a reason you have not acted on these thoughts yet. There is a part of you that wants to live - listen to that part, no matter how small. I truly believe we are all here for a reason, and our very existence is valuable (no matter how bad things are going sometimes).

I heard this many years ago and have always found it to be true: Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Nothing, no matter what it is, lasts forever. There are always solutions. There are always ways to ease the pain. There are always ways to remember you are not alone.