

## How To Help A Loved One On The Autism Spectrum Who Is Suicidal



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For those on the autism spectrum, it can be difficult to experience changes in mood because they don't know how to handle them. Because people who have been diagnosed with autism and Asperger's Syndrome are [prone](#) to depression, they are at higher risk for suicidal thoughts than the general population--particularly young people--so it's important to understand how you can help.

Because people on the autism spectrum often don't have the skills to deal with their emotions--or how to communicate them--they are often faced with either venting their frustration in violent episodes, or internalizing it as [suicidal thoughts](#). This can be frustrating both for the individual and for their caregiver, who may not know how to address the situation. If you have a loved one on the autism spectrum who is suicidal, here are some ways you can help.

### **Recognize the warning signs**

If your loved one has ever had a violent outburst because they don't know how to control their emotions, you understand that it's frustrating and stressful for them to communicate. This can lead to feelings of shame, isolation, and depression, which can in turn lead to self-harm and thoughts of suicide. If your loved one expresses feelings of hopelessness, has become withdrawn, or voices thoughts like "Everyone would be better off if I was dead," it's important to talk to them and let them know you are concerned. Make sure to listen to what they have to say and let them know you are taking them seriously.

Some of the warning signs of suicidal thoughts include sudden risky behavior, violent episodes, increasing anxiety, trouble sleeping or eating, withdrawing from friends and family, feeling hopeless, not being able to enjoy things they used to enjoy, and [substance abuse](#).

### **How to help**

Depending on the individual's level of comfort, you might help them seek counseling or therapy, perhaps in a group setting with others on the autism spectrum. If they don't feel comfortable talking to people they don't know well, let them know you're there for them. Be careful not to use [judgmental](#) statements or make them feel guilty about their feelings; most often, people who are thinking about suicide aren't thinking about themselves. Rather, they are thinking of ending their pain or "bettering" the lives of their families.

### **How to communicate**

It's extremely important to know the right way to communicate with a person on the autism spectrum who is contemplating suicide. Often, talking is difficult for these individuals, so if you want to open up a conversation, ask them first if they are comfortable with it. Maintain eye contact and refrain from making statements about the future; rather, focus on the present. Use positive wording and let them know that you understand. Help them put their feelings into words by summarizing what they are conveying, such as, "It sounds like you are having a tough time with school."

If your loved one suffers from substance abuse issues, let them know that they are not alone and that there is help available. Drugs and alcohol almost always only serve to make things worse, and abuse problems need to be addressed separately from depression.