

What to do if your partner threatens suicide

Has someone you love ever said “I won’t be a problem for you much longer” during an argument or fight? This could be in person or online through text or social media. Whether these words are coming from a romantic partner, a friend, or a family member, they can be very scary to hear, as they could be a warning [sign](#) that they’re contemplating suicide. Suicide is the [second leading cause of death](#) for people between the ages of 15 and 34, meaning that each of us may know someone struggling with suicidal thoughts.

Knowing the [warning signs](#) can help you recognize when people close to you are contemplating suicide. If your partner, someone you know, or you yourself are contemplating suicide, please seek immediate help. [Kids Help Phone](#) and the [Crisis Centre of BC](#) are available 24/7.

But what if your partner regularly threatens suicide, particularly whenever you’re not doing something they want you to do, or when you’re trying to leave the relationship? This is a form of emotional abuse – your partner is trying to manipulate you by playing on your feelings of love and fear for them.

You might get angry when this happens, but you also might feel like you must give in to them to avoid a potential tragedy. Both feelings are natural, and there is no shame in reacting that way. It’s normal to be afraid for someone’s life, especially someone close to you. When your partner makes these threats repeatedly, they may be using them to [control your actions](#). If you start to notice this, here are steps you can take to protect yourself and possibly help your partner.

Tell your partner you care about them, but stick to your boundaries

Giving in to threats over and over does not make a relationship healthy, and it only creates anger and resentment on your end.

Knowing the difference between the warning signs of suicide and a pattern of threats as a method of manipulation or abuse can help you feel more secure in setting your boundaries.

If your partner is threatening suicide or even joking about it, you could say something like, “You know I care about you very much, and I understand you’re upset right now, but I don’t think it is

fair to be pressured this way.” This helps show your partner that you care about them while standing firm in your boundaries.

Put the choice to live where it belongs – on your partner

Even when we are going through a challenging time, we all get to choose how we handle those emotions. Ultimately, we are not responsible for another person’s actions – and this includes if your partner chooses to be abusive or is contemplating suicide.

You could say to your partner, “I really care about you, and I don’t want anything to happen to you. I can try and help find resources that can help you, but it is ultimately your choice. I won’t force you to do anything you don’t want to.” If your partner is struggling with suicidal thoughts, that is sadly something that’s outside of your control. You can share resources or programs, such as [Kids Help Phone](#) and the [Crisis Centre of BC](#) that can help them. Remember, getting help is ultimately up to them.

Remember that no matter what your partner says, you don’t have anything to prove

Sometimes an abusive partner will try to manipulate your emotions by saying something like, “If you really loved me, you’d stop me from killing myself.” The truth is, there are unhealthy patterns in your relationship. Until those unhealthy patterns are addressed, they will most likely continue, no matter how many times you give in to your partner’s demands.

Your partner should not make you “prove” your love or how much you care for them, especially by coercing you to do things that make you uncomfortable. Remember, a relationship is about trust, and your partner should trust that you love and care for them.

Find support

When you hear someone you care about saying they want to take their own life, it is upsetting and traumatic. Whether it is a manipulative threat, a genuine feeling, or a joke, suicide is a challenging thing to talk about. It is not something that you have to navigate on your own.

Organizations such as the [Kids Help Phone](#) and the [Crisis Centre of BC](#) can help you determine how to best support someone who is actively contemplating suicide, and talking about the situation with a friend or family member can help you better identify if it is a pattern of emotional manipulation.

It can also be helpful to connect with a [PEACE Program for Children and Youth](#) in your area who can help you process what is going on with the threats and emotional abuse. If your partner often says they’re going to kill themselves when things aren’t going their way, that’s manipulation and not love – and they’re likely trying to control your actions.

Remember, **you are not alone**. You can't force your partner to get help if they don't want to. They have to make that choice for themselves. If you have questions, please connect with one of these confidential safe support services available:

- [Kids Help Phone](#) (1-800-668-6868 or chat/text through their website),
- [Crisis Centre of BC](#) (1-800-784-2433 or chat through their website) or
- [KUU-US Crisis Line Society](#) (Youth Line: 250-723-2040) for Indigenous youth.

Spark Teen Digital Dating Violence Project

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