

Guide for Facilitated Role-plays

Scripted lines for teacher (or student-facilitator) to read are underlined and bolded
Possible student-respondent answers in quotes

Role-play #1: Nathan – age 14 – is depressed and has been seeing a psychologist for about 6 months. He recently got caught smoking pot and because of that was suspended from his select soccer team. He hasn't come to school for a couple of days and you wonder what is going on.

How do you show him that you care?

- “Hey, I haven't seen you at school for a couple of days and I was worried about you. Are you okay?”
- “What's going on; I'm worried about you.”
- “I heard that you got suspended from the soccer team; that must be awful.”

Now imagine that he tells you *life just isn't worth living; everything is just messed up.* How would you ask him directly about suicide?

- “You just said that everything is messed up and life isn't worth living. Is that mean that you are thinking about giving up, about dying?”
- “Are you telling me that you are thinking about suicide?”
- “Sounds pretty bad; is it so bad that you want to end it all?”

In response Nathan says, *yea, it would just be easier.* What might be the obstacles for getting help for Nathan?

- Nathan doesn't want anyone to know he is depressed and suicidal.
- Nathan is afraid to talk with his counselor; he hasn't been helpful
- Nathan is certain that his parents will be even more disappointed in him.

What could you say to overcome those obstacles and get him help?

- “We need to talk with some adult; who would you trust?”
- “I would go with you to talk with someone.”
- “I don't know your parents very well, but I am sure they would be very sad if you actually ended your life. They probably don't understand how badly you feel.”
- “If you won't go with me to talk, then I need to go myself. I am really worried about you.”

Role-play #2: Ashley – age 15 – has been sad and moody for over a month. She has declined your invitations to hang out. Instead she seems to be spending a lot of time writing poetry and thinking about “being invisible”. Now she has just sent you a text-message telling you about an argument that she had with her mother over a failing grade.

How do you show her that you care?

- “I’m concerned that you think your life is really messed up right now”
- “You’ve sad for awhile and now you have just had this fight with your mom; that must be really horrible.”
- “Do you want to talk about the stuff that is going wrong in your life? I would be glad to listen.”

In response to your concern, Ashley tells you *Thanks, but I can’t see how my life is going to get any better.* How would you ask directly about suicide?

- “You sound really discouraged. Are so down that you are thinking about ending it all?”
- “You sound really sad and hopeless. People who are suicidal sometimes can’t see another way out; are you feeling that way – like wanting to kill yourself?”
- “I would like to make things all better, but I can’t. What I can do is listen and help but first I need to know how desperate you are; are you thinking about suicide?”

In response Ashley answers, *yes, but why do you care?* What might be the obstacles for getting help for Ashley?

- Ashley is ashamed of feeling this way.
- Ashley is worried that you will stop being her friend.
- Ashley doesn’t believe that anyone can really help her feel better.

How might you overcome those obstacles and get her help?

- “I want to help you. You are my friend and I care about you. Let’s go talk with the school counselor.”
- “I won’t stop being your friend. I care too much about you to stop caring.”
- “If we go to talk with the counselor, I can stay with you if you want.”

Role-play #3 Lee – age 12 – seems to get angry over nothing. He hates school and doesn't bother to turn in his homework. His older sister has recently been diagnosed with cancer and his parents spend all their time at doctors or medical procedures. He isn't interested in talking and would rather just play video games.

How do you show him that you care?

- “What’s going on – you seem like you are mad all the time?”
- “I heard about your sister; that’s really sad.”
- “It doesn’t seem like you want to talk, so let’s just play video games together.”

In response to your concern, he gets angry and tells you, *you won't have to worry about me much longer*. How would you ask directly about suicide?

- “I am not sure what that means exactly, but I am concerned that you are talking about killing yourself. Is that what you are saying?”
- “You are worrying me; are you thinking about suicide?”
- “I can’t stop worrying about you. I am your friend. When you say that I don’t have to worry about much longer, I think you are planning to check out – to die- is that what you are saying?”

In response, Lee says yes, but I don't want you to stop me and don't tell anyone else. What would do?

- “I need to tell someone, if you won’t.”
- “I would like you to talk to a counselor or some other adult that you trust – is there anyone?”
- “I can’t keep this a secret. You may be mad at me, but I just can’t do nothing.”

Role-play #4 Heather – age 15 – is very thin and is always worrying about being overweight. She is your really good friend and she has told you that she has times when she gets so anxious that she can't sit still or think clearly. She gets really good grades, but her mother thinks that she could do even better. She has just had fight with her boyfriend and she is crying in the bathroom at school.

How do you show her that you care about her?

- “I am really concerned about you and you are just not doing well.”
- “Let's talk”
- “I am not sure exactly how to help, but I will try.”

Imagine she responds by saying, *thanks for being my friend – you understand me, but no one else does.* What more would you need to ask about to find out if she is suicidal?

- “How long having you being feeling this way?”
- “Have you thought about how you might resolve these problems?”

Imagine that you asked her whether she was so sad that she was thinking about suicide and she said *no*. She may not be suicidal but you are still worried about Heather; where can she go for help for her anxiety?

- “We need to go talk to someone; who would you suggest?”
- “I know that you said that you were not suicidal, but you are dealing with lots of problems and you need some help.”
- “You probably don't want to talk with your boyfriend or mother right now, but I think we should talk with someone. I know about a crisis line – do you want to try calling there?”

Role-play #5 Natasha – age 16 - has just been dumped by her boyfriend. You know she takes medicine for bi-polar illness but you don't think she sees a counselor. At lunch you notice that she has new scratch marks on her wrists; she has cut herself before when she was frustrated or upset.

How do you show her that you care?

- “I am concerned about the scratches on your arm. Do you want to talk?”
- “Things aren't going very well for you, are they? I am here to listen.”
- “I heard that Peter broke up with you; how are you doing?”

How could you ask her directly about suicide?

- “Sometimes when people hurt themselves they are thinking about suicide; are you?”
- “With so many things going wrong, I am concerned that you are thinking about killing yourself. Are you?”
- “I wonder if you are feeling like dying and just escaping from all your problems.”

In response, she answers that she isn't sure; what would you say to get her help?

- “I want you to get some help. I don't know for sure what to do.”
- “Who would you feel okay talking with?”
- “I would be willing to go with you – who should we talk with?”

Role-play #6 Jeremy – age 18 – tells you while he is driving you home that he found out today that he is failing chemistry and that he will not have enough credits to graduate from high school. He suggests that the two of you get drunk and just forget about life. You have never seen him this upset. Coincidentally you heard a rumor today about Jeremy – that he is “gay” - but you don’t really know if he is or whether that really matters.

How do you show him that you care?

- ‘You really are upset. I wish I could make things better. Should we just talk a little?’
- “I am not sure what all is going on, but it seems like there is a lot. I’m sorry.”

How do you handle the suggestion of getting drunk?

- “I am not so sure that drinking will make things better; how about we go somewhere and talk.”

What, if anything, do you say to Jeremy about the rumor you heard related to his sexual orientation?

- Say nothing and not spread a rumor
OR
- “I heard a rumor in school and I want you to know that if it is true, it makes no difference to me.”

How do you follow up on his comment about “forgetting life” – does he mean suicide?

How would you find out?

- “Are you talking about suicide?”
- “When you say that you want to forget about life, do you mean temporarily or permanently”?

How would you help Jeremy?

- “I think we should talk with someone.”
- “Who can we talk to – this is serious.”