

Changing Minds  
Module 5  
Script for Improv Helping a Friend in Suicidal Crisis Demonstration

- Two (2) similar scenarios.
- Same actors/presenters each time but reversing roles.
- First scenario, the suicidal person is not resistant to getting help and speaking about their crisis with their friend
- Second scenario, the suicidal is resistant to getting help and being honest. Eventually, the suicidal person thaws and agrees to receive help.
- Each scenario should take no more than five (5) minutes
- Actors/presenters should sit side by side for this demonstration. It has been proven that it's more helpful for a person who is trying to assist, to sit next to the person in crisis rather than across from them. It gives the person in crisis the feeling that "we're in this together."
- Commit these scripts to memory as best you can. When presenting, you don't have to recite the script word for word. We don't want one or both actors to get off the rails too much by improvising too much, which could lead to the possibility of speaking in unsafe language (which, of course, we don't want). What is most important is the order of operations (so we can demonstrate as quickly as possible in a short time frame, how to help someone), and tapping into the emotion of actually being a person in crisis and/or a person trying to help someone in crisis.

In either scenario, you can/should address each other by your first names. For the purposes of these scripts, I have the lines for the friend of the person in crisis labeled as FRIEND; and the lines for the person in crisis labeled as CRISIS.

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*Scene where person in CRISIS is not resistant to help*

FRIEND

Hey person's name . I haven't seen you in class in like, a week. I miss you. What's going on?

CRISIS

Not much...

FRIEND

No, for real. What's up? You look... really sad. I care about you. You can tell me what's up.

CRISIS

Well... okay. It's just—I found out a few weeks back my parents are getting a divorce. Thirty years out the window. Where am I supposed to go for holidays? I'll never have a home again—not a real home...

FRIEND

I'm so sorry...

CRISIS

And yesterday, my girlfriend/boyfriend, or gf/bf's name broke up with me. Dumped me. I thought we were in love. Apparently I'm unlovable. My parents can't keep it together... I can't either. My life is over.

FRIEND

Hey... your life isn't over. You're going through an incredibly difficult time right now...

CRISIS

Yea? Well I bet you didn't know I'm flunking out of school, too? The stress of my parents. The all-nighters studying (*college add in line*- studying macro-economics and macrobiotics—who picks that as a double major? Oh, yea, me!). I'm flunking. My parents will kill me. My gf/bf hates me. I'm a burden to everyone. It would be better if I didn't exist...

FRIEND

Darn/dang/damn... you're going through so much right now. And I'm here for you. But you're not a burden. You know, I wouldn't be a good friend if I didn't ask... have you been thinking about suicide?

CRISIS

I dunno. No. Maybe. Okay... yes.

FRIEND

I get it. You're going through a lot—more than anyone should have to, and all at once. But you are definitely not a burden and my world would be much worse off without you. You always cheer me up when I'm having a bad day. You make me laugh till I cry... and you do that often... I think you like seeing me cry.

CRISIS

(still sullen but thawing)

Ha. Yeah. You're an ugly crier...

FRIEND

Haha true. I won't even deny it. But I should tell you, I was suicidal last year. It was after my grandma passed away—she practically raised me—and after I got put on academic probation. But I found out about the counseling center...

CRISIS

Whoa... counseling? No. Not me.

FRIEND

Just hear me out. It helped. We didn't just talk about sad stuff. But how I could help myself become a better person. To figure out how to cope and manage the bad days and make the good days better. And after a few weeks, I knew I had what I needed, so I'd never harm myself—so that suicide was off the table for me for good.

CRISIS

(still a little incredulous)

All that from counseling?

FRIEND

Yes. You look a little reluctant. But how about we walk there together?

CRISIS

I dunno...

FRIEND

Do it for me. I want to make sure you're safe. I know it doesn't seem like it right now, but this will all get better. And I know my favorite counselor will help you see that. She's awesome. Just walk with me. I'll even wait for you while you're talking to her.

CRISIS

Okay. Okay. I can do this. I'll walk with you.

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*Scene where person in CRISIS is resistant to help*

FRIEND

Hey person's name . I haven't seen you in class in like, a week. I miss you. What's going on?

CRISIS

Not much...

FRIEND

No, for real. What's up? You look... really sad. I care about you. You can tell me what's up.

CRISIS

Well... okay. It's just—I found out a few weeks back my parents are getting a divorce. Thirty years out the window. Where am I supposed to go for holidays? I'll never have a home again—not a real home...

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FRIEND

Darn/dang/damn... you're going through so much right now. And I'm here for you. But you're not a burden. You know, I wouldn't be a good friend if I didn't ask... have you been thinking about suicide?

CRISIS

I dunno. No. Maybe. Okay... yes.

FRIEND

I get it. You're going through a lot—more than anyone should have to, and all at once. But you are definitely not a burden and my world would be much worse off without you. You always cheer me up when I'm having a bad day. You make me laugh till I cry... and you do that often... I think you like seeing me cry.

CRISIS

Whatever...

FRIEND

Listen... I never told you this—but I was suicidal last year. It was after my grandma passed away—she practically raised me—and after I got put on academic probation. But I found out about the counseling center...

CRISIS

Whoa... counseling? No. Not me. That's for the crazies.

FRIEND

No! It's for everyone, anyone. Just hear me out. It helped. We didn't just talk about sad stuff. But how I could help myself become a better person. To figure out how to cope and manage the bad days and make the good days better. And after a few weeks, I knew I had what I needed, so I'd never harm myself—so that suicide was off the table for me for good.

CRISIS

(still incredulous)

All that from counseling? They can't help me. I'm way past that. No one can help me. I only wish I had someone to take care of my two puppies...

FRIEND

I didn't know you had puppies... but they rely on you?

CRISIS

I'm the only one who takes care of them, feeds them. They love me. And my parents wouldn't take them in. And I can't leave them with some kennel.

FRIEND

So you're not a burden. If you weren't here... those two puppies who love you; they wouldn't survive. They need you...

CRISIS

I see what you're trying to do

FRIEND

Listen, I know you're not really into getting help right now. But what if we made a deal? What if I help you find a good person who can help you take care of your puppies. But in exchange you walk with me to the counseling center right now? A deal is a deal and I'll hold up my end.

CRISIS

I dunno...

FRIEND

Do it for me. I want to make sure you're safe. I know it doesn't seem like it right now, but this will all get better. And I know my favorite counselor will help you see that. She's awesome. Just walk with me. I'll even wait for you while you're talking to her.

CRISIS

Okay. Okay. I can do this. I'll walk with you.