



Culturally Responsive Suicide Conversations

CARE with respectful curiosity — ask directly, never assume

Culture shapes language, meaning and help-seeking—but never tells the whole story.

A person may describe distress through emotions, body symptoms, relationships, faith or spiritual concerns. Ask what their words mean to them. Do not use culture to avoid a clear suicide question.

ASK WITH RESPECTFUL CURIOSITY

- “What words would you use for what you are experiencing?”
- “What do you think is contributing to this?”
- “Are faith, family, culture or community important in how you understand this?”
- “Who feels safe and helpful to involve—and who should not be involved?”
- “What would make professional support easier to use?”

ASK DIRECTLY: “Are you thinking about suicide?”

CONTEXT MAY MATTER

Explore only what is relevant to this person. Possible influences include:

- language barriers or unfamiliar mental health terms
- settlement pressure, family separation or isolation
- racism, discrimination, visa or employment stress
- stigma, confidentiality fears or small-community visibility
- family expectations, religion, spirituality and community strengths

Migration itself is not a diagnosis or a single risk story.

WORKING WITH A QUALIFIED INTERPRETER

- Ask the person about preferred language, dialect, interpreter gender and any community-connection concerns.
- Explain confidentiality and the interpreter’s communication role before the conversation begins.
- Speak to the person—not about them. Use short sentences, plain words and pauses.
- Do not automatically use children, relatives or friends for sensitive mental health conversations.
- Check understanding in the person’s own words; do not assume a direct translation carries the same meaning.
- Qualified clinicians remain responsible for assessment, safety planning and risk management.

CARE IN ONE MINUTE

C

Connect and
Create Safety

A

Ask and
Understand

R

Respond with
Compassion

E

Engage
Support

IMMEDIATE DANGER

Call 000. Stay with the person if it is safe. Follow emergency-service instructions. For 24/7 support: Lifeline 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467.