

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

CONVERSATION STARTER

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death of 10- to 24-year-olds¹. In the United States, more people die by suicide than by homicide or car accidents. For every person who dies by suicide, 316 people seriously consider suicide but do not kill themselves².

Overall, 67% of young adults first inform a friend they are feeling suicidal before telling anyone else, and 39% of college students experience a significant mental health issue³.

This conversation starter is adapted from the Active Minds Validate, Appreciate, Refer (V-A-R) mental health support tool [conversation guide](#). It is recommended the facilitator show the [V-A-R video](#) as part of the discussion, so a projector and screen are needed.

In this document, questions to ask and points to make verbatim are in **bold**. Notes and instructions for facilitators are in *italics*.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Share the statistics above with participants.

What stands out to you when you hear this data?

Allow responses from participants.

It is important to understand that most, if not all, of us will experience times of significant mental distress and challenge at some point. And often, help from a friend, like a sorority sister, can play a huge role in helping us successfully navigate those challenging times in a healthy way. Our time today will be focused on providing a framework to use when helping a friend through a challenging time.

Ask participants to pair up to discuss the following discussion question. Allow 7-10 minutes for the small group discussion.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Describe a time you helped a friend or relative through a difficult situation. What did you find was effective in helping that person? What was ineffective?

[Active Minds](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting mental health awareness and education for young adults, partnered with Alpha Chi Omega, Pi Kappa Phi, Sigma Nu and Zeta Tau Alpha to develop resources for teaching fraternity and sorority members how to support a friend or loved one who may be struggling. One outcome of that partnership is the Validate, Appreciate, Refer (V-A-R) mental health support tool.

Show the V-A-R video at activeminds.org/GreekLifeVAR. The password is **GreekLifeVAR**.

V-A-R conversations can take many forms: phone, in person, text message, FaceTime and many others. The medium does not matter. What does matter is that the other individual knows you care.

If a friend told you, “I didn’t go to class this week – I just couldn’t do it,” how could you respond using the V-A-R framework?

The last letter – “R” – is of critical importance. We must recognize the limitation of the help we can offer. And in some cases, the biggest help we can provide is getting the friend connected to a counselor or other mental health professional.

One of the easiest ways to make that connection is by encouraging your friend to call or text the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#). The Lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress. The Lifeline is a national network of crisis centers. Calling or texting 988 will put the person in direct contact with a trained professional who can provide immediate help and connect the person to additional local resources for ongoing support.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

What can our chapter do to increase awareness of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline?

Responses may include:

- Hang the 988 educational poster within our chapter house/space and at various locations on campus.
- Research if our campus has an Active Minds chapter, and if so, partner with them on an awareness campaign.
- Facilitate a workshop using this conversation starter for the chapter and/or a wider campus audience each year as part of our [annual mental health awareness initiatives](#).

CONCLUSION

The data on mental health is clear – without question, you will have a friend in your life at some point who will be navigating a challenging situation that is potentially causing

significant mental distress. Be the friend they need you to be and use the V-A-R mental health support tool to provide them help, including, when needed, connecting them with additional resources such as the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#).

Explore more of Alpha Chi Omega's mental health education, awareness initiatives and resources on the [Mental Health Education](#) page.

REFERENCES

¹[Disparities in Suicide | CDC](#)

²[By the Numbers: Lifeline \(988lifeline.Org\)](#)

³[Statistics - Young Adult Mental Health Stats and Figures \(Activeminds.Org\)](#)

