

# Presence of Mind: When to Get Expert Help

Music plays as the series title displays: Presence of Mind, sponsored by Cloud9 and Kaiser Permanente.

## Introduction

Kahlief Adams is an award-winning podcast host and gaming industry personality. He opens the video by talking about the importance of getting expert help when needed.

Hey everybody, this is Kahlief Adams, and I have a pretty serious topic to talk to you all about today. In some of our earlier videos from this series, we talked about taking better care of your own mental health and helping others when needed. This video is about helping someone who may be having a more serious crisis or is needing more immediate help, even sometimes professional help.

Everyday mental health issues can be super challenging. I know I've been there, and I've gone through it, but when it becomes overwhelming, sometimes it can lead to a person inflicting self-harm or putting themselves at risk for suicide. It's really important to recognize when someone's situation has gotten that serious so we can help them in the right way.

This video will help you add some skills to help you recognize when someone might be at risk. Take a look at the video and share it with friends and family.

## *Introducing our narrator*

Hello, I'm Caleb, a professional esports commentator and gaming show co-host. I'll be guiding you through this interactive video, so let's get started.

## *Welcome to the third video*

This is the third video in the Presence of Mind mental health series. This video is about recognizing when someone might need immediate or expert help. Be sure to check out all 3 videos in the series:

- Mental Health Matters: By making your mental wellbeing a priority, you'll see a positive impact on your life.
- Helping Others: Talking openly about mental health and wellness with others can make a big difference.
- When to Get Expert Help: Recognize when someone needs expert help or get help for yourself.

## *Resources for immediate help*

Because this video discusses self-harm and suicide, it may contain triggers for some people. Here are 3 resources for immediate help if you need it:

- The National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text "Home" to 741741
- The Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386 or text "Start" to 678-678.

## *Are you worried about anyone?*

Let's get started by doing a little thought experiment. Think for a moment about your friends and fellow gamers. Is anyone having a hard time? Dealing with intense emotions? Struggling with an ongoing mental

health issue?

Now, think: Is there anyone you're really worried about? Maybe someone is hurting themselves and you're worried they might do something even more serious.

Have you had such worries about a friend or fellow gamer in the past?

### **A startling statistic**

Would it surprise you to know that for people aged 10 to 34, the second leading cause of death is suicide?

That's a scary statistic, especially when you think it might affect someone you know.

Source: National Institute for Mental Health and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

### **The risk of suicide is real**

Here's another statistic that shows that the risk of suicide is real. Among high school students, more than 7% attempted suicide one or more times.

Also, more than 17% seriously considered suicide and more than 13% made a specific plan to attempt suicide.

Source: CDC's National Vital Statistics System

### ***Our message is a positive one***

As scary as those statistics might be, our message in this video is a positive one:

- Prevention works. There are actions individuals can take and programs and services that really work.
- Resilience and recovery are possible.
- You can play an important role in helping someone in a crisis.

### **Challenging a common myth**

Let's challenge a common myth: Talking about suicide or asking someone if they feel suicidal will encourage suicide attempts.

The fact is: Talking to a person who is at risk for suicide about what they're going through can help them cope.

That's where you come in. Talk to the person. Listen patiently, compassionately, and without judgment. Share your concerns and offer support.

### ***Kala's story***

Kala has a story about a time in his life when he was grieving, and his thoughts turned very dark. When he decided to open up and express his feelings, it helped him to heal. And, it led him to seek expert help.

Yo, my name is Kala and I grew up in a household full of alcohol abuse and drug abuse and pretty much everything else that you could possibly think of that's negative. I kinda went through that as a kid. I spent pretty much my whole life dealing with feelings of not being good enough or just like self-worth issues, self-doubt, all that sort of stuff.

It wasn't until last year in the middle of COVID, I was in Los Angeles and my brother took his life in Canada. It was his funeral day, and I was stuck with the choice of just continuing to isolate in my house in Los Angeles or just open up. And for the first time in my entire life, I opened up. I turned on my Twitch stream and I cried. I talked about all of my feelings and my issues and I wrote a song about my brother on my stream.

It wasn't until that day that I realized how important it is to not isolate and to actually open up and that it's OK to talk about your feelings. And then shortly after that was the first time that I sought professional help through therapy. So, after that moment it completely revolutionized the way that I thought about mental health, and the way that I thought about myself.

So, if there's anybody out there listening to this, it's OK to seek professional help. It's OK to be feeling awful, but you don't have to stay that way forever. And I highly, highly encourage you to ask for help.

## **Noticing when things get more serious**

In the previous video for this series, we introduced a 3-step process for helping others. We'll use that same model here.

### ***The engagement process***

The 3 steps in the engagement process are to notice, engage, and support. Use these steps when it looks like someone you know might need immediate or expert support.

### **A deeper level of noticing**

The process begins with noticing. If you saw the previous video, you already know the signs someone may need help:

- Engaging less with others
- Difficulty focusing on favorite activities, such as gaming
- Mood swings, such as going from chill to really sad when nothing obvious has changed
- Tears or crying

We encourage an even deeper level of noticing. We want you to move beyond the obvious clues and notice what else might be going on.

### ***Suicide warning signs***

What kinds of clues might indicate someone is having a crisis? Or actively thinking about suicide? It could be something they say, something they do, or just their overall mood. There are many possible clues and observing even just one of them should alert you to pay attention.

Listen for the following clues in what an individual talks about:

- Feeling trapped
- Feeling like a burden to others
- Experiencing unbearable pain
- Having no reason to live
- Wanting to die

Pay attention to the following behaviors:

- Self-isolation
- Withdrawing from activities
- Avoiding school or work
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Self-harm, such as cutting, punching walls, etc.
- Acting recklessly
- Aggression
- Misuse or abuse of alcohol or drugs

Notice the following indicators of the individual's mood:

- Loss of interest
- Depression
- Rage
- Anxiety
- Humiliation
- Irritability

### ***Kayla's story***

Now, let's consider Kayla's story. She talks about the little things she noticed first about a friend and how that led her to pay closer attention to what was going on.

Hi. My name is Kayla Lee, and I'm one of the partnership managers here at Cloud 9. So, to talk about a time when one of my closest friends had a really hard time with her mental health and I caught on. It was a time when she had just come back from a year abroad. She had come back to California and I started picking up on the little things. The little shifts and change in her behavior. Whether it was small things like having a very hard time responding to work emails or friends' texts in a timely manner, or responding at all. Or, getting into little fights with our friends, best friends, sister, family that were very out of character for her was when I started first realizing that something was going on.

And only a few months later did she disclose that she was having a very hard time I think readjusting to American society and just coming back, she had to readjust to her depression and anxiety meds. Noticing the small things in people, whether it's friends, family, or even strangers is the most that we can do, and you know get ahead of it. Get ahead of talking about it and getting rid of the stigma that comes along with talking about mental health is the best and most human thing that we can do.

### ***What about alcohol and drugs?***

So, what about alcohol and drugs? Can they play a role in causing a crisis, or making it worse? Sometimes, when misused or abused, yes.

For some individuals, the misuse or abuse of alcohol or drugs can cause or intensify depression, aggression, reckless behavior, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. For others, finding themselves in a crisis may trigger them to "self-medicate" with alcohol or drugs.

Either way, your role is to notice, without making a judgment. If you're concerned about misuse or abuse, look at what other clues are telling you about whether the individual is experiencing a crisis.

## ***Practice noticing: Tamir's story***

Time to practice noticing. Read Tamir's story, then identify what signs suggest that he is having a crisis and needs help.

Tamir is an avid gamer who often plays League of Legends with friends. Recently, Tamir's cousin, also an LoL gamer, passed away unexpectedly. Since then, Tamir has been playing League day and night but has otherwise withdrawn from friends and family. He avoids your texts and calls.

The other day he said, "It all feels so hopeless when someone so young can just die like that."

### **Here are some signs you might have noticed**

Here are some signs you might have noticed that Tamir is having a crisis and needs help. Since his cousin died, he's had a lot of anxiety. He plays League nonstop and has withdrawn from friends and family. He feels hopeless. You would be right to be worried about Tamir and you should keep noticing what's going on with him.

## **Engage with kindness and compassion**

Once you've noticed that someone may be having a crisis, the next steps are to engage and support the individual.

### ***The engagement process***

Remember Kayla's story about noticing her friend was struggling? She had a powerful message that talking and engaging is the most human thing we can do. Starting these conversations can be tough, so let's look at some tips.

### **How do you start the conversation?**

In some situations, you might be able to ease into a conversation by asking a casual question, such as, "Hey, you seem kind of down. Would you like to talk?" Here are some more examples:

- You don't seem like yourself lately. Is everything alright?
- You've been really quiet. Is everything OK?
- Seems like you're having a tough time and I'm worried about you. What's going on?

But if you're concerned that a person might be at risk for self-harm or suicide, you should definitely ask directly about suicide. Asking the question can help them talk about their feelings. Here are some examples:

- Are you having thoughts about hurting yourself?
- Have you ever thought about wanting to die?
- Are you thinking about suicide?

### ***Starting the conversation: Justine's story***

Read Justine's story, then write a question you could use to start a serious conversation with her.

Justine is a gaming buddy you've known for years. She's been having a lot of anxiety about school and you find out she's been pulling all-nighters. She looks exhausted and doesn't want to join the group for any games. She's made several comments about not wanting to be here anymore. You're worried that she might be thinking about suicide.

## What could you say?

Here are a couple of examples of what you could ask Justine:

- I'm super concerned about you. Can we talk?
- When you say you don't want to be here anymore, it makes me really worried. Are you having thoughts about wanting to die?

You would be right to be worried about Justine and you should keep engaging with her.

## What's next?

Once you get a conversation going, what's next? If you watched the previous video, you already know the answer to this one. Listen - patiently, compassionately, and without judgment.

Use a relaxed and thoughtful tone and be willing to wait. Sometimes people who are struggling need a moment to think before they speak.

Be ready to sit with some silence that might feel uncomfortable. Your patience and compassion can be calming to a person whose thoughts and feelings are in turmoil.

## As you listen

As you listen, remember that your role is not to solve the person's problem. You can help best when you just listen to understand.

Also, it's not on you to diagnose any mental health conditions. If you have serious concerns about the individual's safety, your role is to ask how they are. And ask yourself: "Am I worried this person is at risk for self-harm or suicide?"

## *If you think someone is at risk, get help*

Step 3 in the engagement process is to provide support. Often, when a person is having thoughts about self-harm or suicide, a big fear is that if they accept help, things will get out of control, others will take over, or they might be hospitalized without their consent.

Here are 3 ways anyone can get immediate help without identifying themselves. The individuals who respond will listen with compassion and without judgment.

- The National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text "Home" to 741741
- The Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386 or text "Start" to 678-678.

## *Don's story*

Don tells a story about a time when he was having suicidal thoughts and what happened when he sought help.

Hi, my name is Don Boyce, and I am the VP of partnerships at Cloud 9. I just wanted to talk to you guys really briefly about probably one of the darkest times in my life.

I was a freshman, an undergrad. It was my first time living away from home. I was in a long-distance relationship. I remember playing a ton of World of Warcraft. I wouldn't leave my room to eat. I was doing OK in school, but really didn't have a social life outside of that. I wanted to show everyone how much pain I was in. And I really didn't know or have the voice or words to express that. For a while I was having suicidal thoughts because that was the only way that I could think of to express my pain to the world.

So, my dad started noticing. He was the first person that took notice. Just in the tone of my voice, he could tell that I was clearly really depressed when I would talk to him. I wasn't happy about the things that normally made me happy, and he encouraged me to reach out to the counseling center. And I'll never forget writing that email, one of the hardest things I've ever done, and hitting send. I was nervous. And I hadn't spoken up to anyone.

So, I eventually got over the hump, went to the counseling center and they gave me this little card that was a phone number to call if I ever was thinking really concretely about suicide. That little card was a window of hope that I wasn't stuck in the situation that I was in. So even if you feel uncomfortable about reaching out to someone, even if you think that their pain is private, it's always really helpful to reach out, even if it's a family member. Thank you.

### ***Helping someone find resources***

When the situation is not an emergency, it's still important to provide support. Sometimes, engaging and listening is enough. And it's always a good idea to refer someone to [findyourwords.org](https://findyourwords.org) where they can find all kinds of great resources.

### ***What is your takeaway?***

As we bring this final video to a close, take a moment to reflect on the most important thing you've learned.

### **Thanks for your participation**

Thanks so much for your participation. This is Caleb signing off. It's been my pleasure to be your guide. Take care.

## **Wrapping up**

Kahlief Adams wraps up the video with a few parting words.

As we close out this 3-part video series, I hope you've gotten a lot out of it. We all have an opportunity to make our great gaming community even better by talking openly about mental health, looking out for one another, and stepping up when someone is having a crisis.

If you haven't seen the first 2 videos, I encourage you to check them out. Alanah Pierce will introduce you to the first one, Mental Health Matters. Greg Miller covers the second one, Helping Others. And from all 3 of us, happy gaming and take care.

Congratulations on completing the interactive video. Please complete a [short survey](#).