

A large, intricate mandala pattern in white and blue, featuring a central sunburst-like flower surrounded by concentric circles of leaves and smaller flowers. The pattern is split horizontally by a red band.

STRONGER

a coloring
resource to build
connection,
share hope, &
strengthen
support



Vital
Improving Wellness in Alabama

Created by VitAL

This resource was compiled by VitAL in partnership with the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

VitAL thanks the following individuals who created, drafted, and reviewed components in *STRONGER: A coloring resource to build connection, share hope, and strengthen support*.

Contributors:

Hannah Rogers
Tamela Hughes, MA, LPC
Pam Williams, LMSW
Paige Parish, EdD, LICSW
Shanna McIntosh, MS, AADC
David L. Albright, PhD

VitAL Reviewers:

Macy Dye Craddock
Ellen Robertson, MPH, PhD

Welcome to **STRONGER**

This coloring book is a gentle space to slow down, breathe, and remember that people grow stronger together. Each page highlights a way we can show up for ourselves and one another through support, conversation, compassion, and hope.

Use pencils, crayons, or markers, and take your time. There's no *right* way to color or work through this book, just *your* way.

Coloring can be calming, but it isn't a substitute for care. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, reach out now. Don't wait.

988 is a quick resource to call or text. Calling or texting 988 is a great first step to finding help. More resources can be found in the back of the coloring book.

Each page of this book takes one letter of the word **STRONGER** and breaks it down: giving you an idea or action that can be used to help build community, foster hope, and strengthen support for ourselves and one another.

Before each coloring page, there is information on both **warning signs** and **helping tools**.

Warning signs are behaviors, thoughts, or changes you might notice in yourself or others that could be a warning sign for mental distress or suicide.

Helping tools are things you can do to address those warning signs; however, these should never be substituted for professional care or intervention. If you or someone you know is distressed or thinking about suicide, contact help immediately.

Warning Signs:

Being able to recognize these signs of social isolation is a first step in building support for someone who may be struggling emotionally or considering suicide. Social isolation can include:

- Someone who is emotionally distressed or considering suicide may withdraw from fun activities, family, or work events that they've enjoyed in the past.
- They may suddenly stop hanging out with friends, family, and/or faith communities.

Helping Tools:

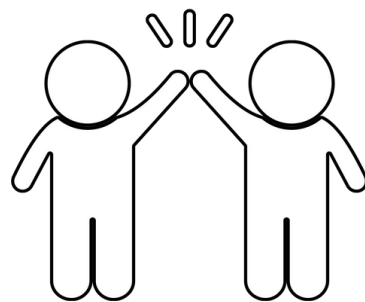
Showing support for someone with mental distress or thoughts of suicide can look different for everyone. Here are some things you can do to support one another.

- Practice active listening to demonstrate support.
 - Make eye contact, listen to understand, or nod or say “okay” as they are talking.
- Connect with someone who can help.
 - Professional help is available! A resource that is easy to access and is free is 988. You can call, text, or chat—or even just pass the number on!

S

SUPPORT

EACH OTHER



Warning Signs:

The thoughts and behaviors below might mean someone is struggling emotionally or considering suicide. Recognizing these signs in conversation is one of the first steps to talking openly with one another.

- You or someone else...
 - may express feelings of being trapped or in unbearable pain;
 - may think of themselves as an “outcast;”
 - may think the challenges in their lives weigh others down; or
 - may have thoughts that others would be better off if they were no longer around.

Helping Tools:

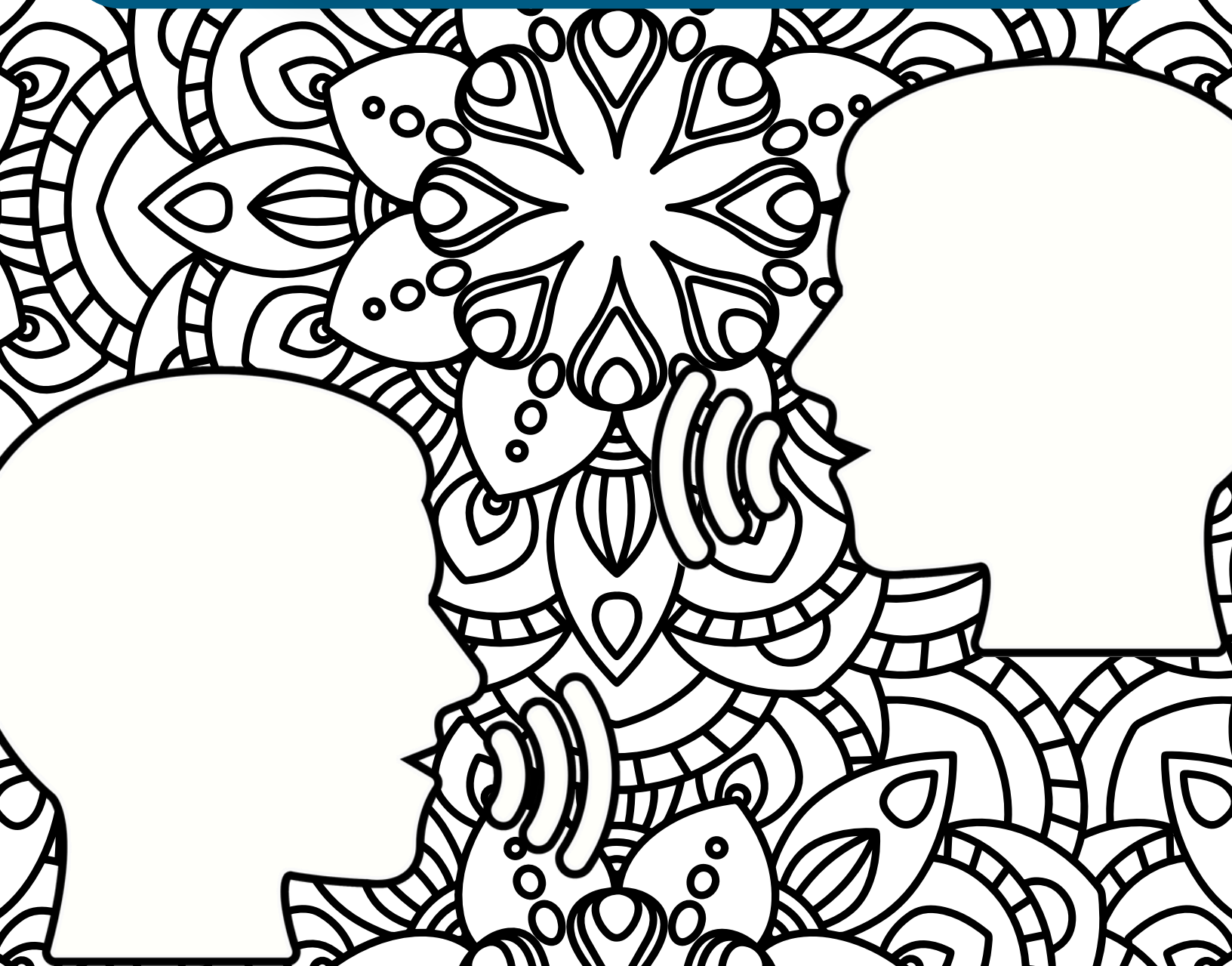
Talking openly with someone experiencing feelings like those above can spark lifesaving conversations. Let them know you want to hear what they have to say! Here are some ways to talk openly:

- Keep your tone calm.
- Ask clarifying questions such as, “Are you saying that you need a break from life like a vacation, or that you’re thinking about suicide?”
- Don’t dismiss what they have to say. Avoid things like, “you have so much to live for” or even, “why would you do that?”

TALK



OPENLY



Warning Signs:

Recognizing risks when they begin is crucial. The thoughts and behaviors listed below might mean someone is struggling emotionally or considering suicide. Some risky behaviors include:

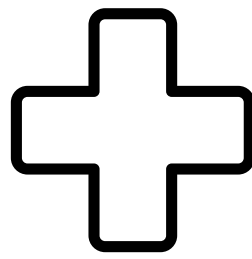
- Engaging in reckless or dangerous behaviors like,
 - excessive alcohol use or binge drinking;
 - using drugs or misusing prescription medications;
 - combining substances in dangerous ways;
 - driving recklessly or speeding; and
 - unsafe sexual behavior.

Helping Tools:

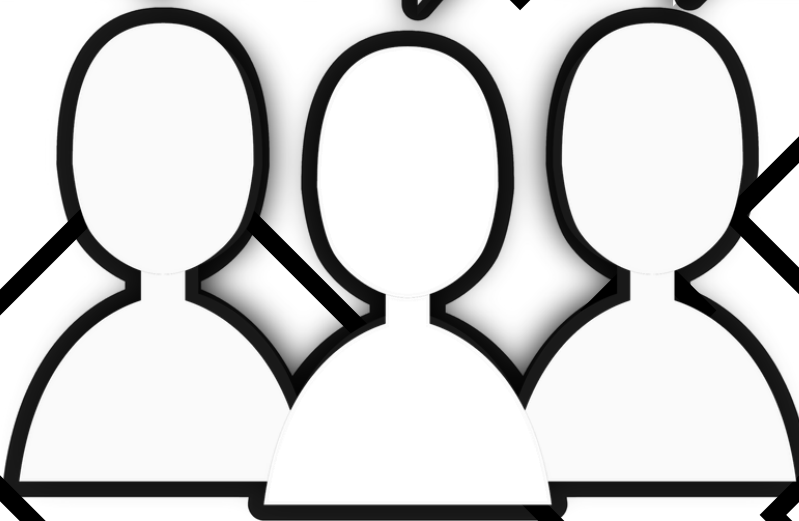
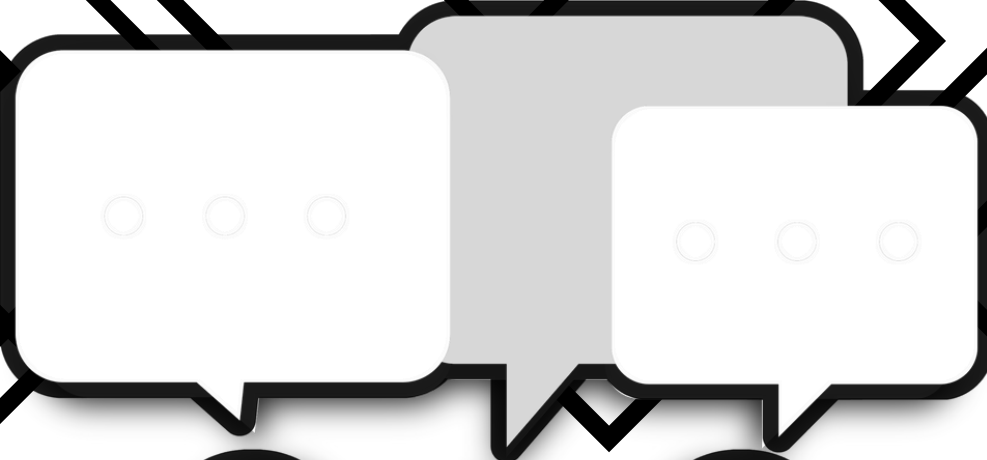
Recognizing risk means there's a sign that something bigger could be going on—like emotional distress or suicide. When you recognize this, it's a chance to connect. Here are some non-judgmental ways to start conversations after risk is recognized:

- You shared you've been drinking/using more. Is everything okay?
- I'm worried about you. The way you're driving feels risky. Are you okay?

R



RESPOND TO
THE RISK



Warning Signs:

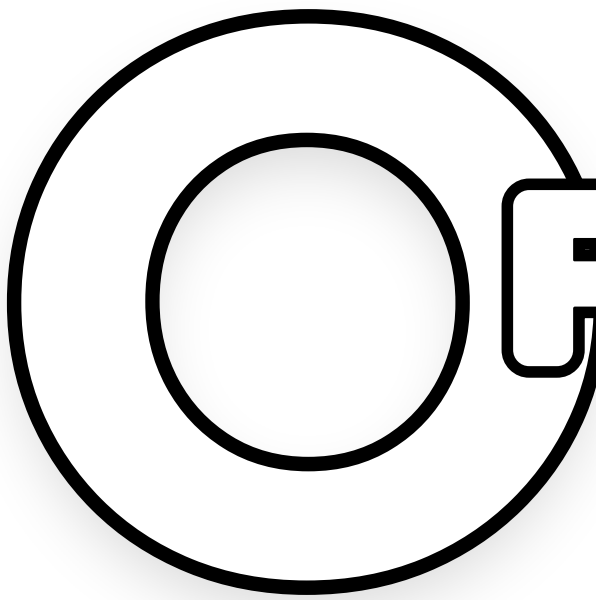
Some thoughts and conversations like the following could mean someone is struggling emotionally or considering suicide. If you or someone else is experiencing these, offer to help them or seek out help for yourself.

- Talking about feeling hopeless.
- Saying or thinking they have no reason to live.
- Feeling powerless and limited in daily life.
- Feeling doomed, alienated, or depleted.

Helping Tools:

Feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness often reinforce each other, making it harder to see solutions or feel in control. Here are some things you can do to offer help:

- Encourage the person to actively form connections to people similar to them.
- Invite them to an activity or event that gives you hope and purpose.
- Give them a space to discuss their fears of hopelessness without dismissal.
 - Sometimes expressing these thoughts out loud allows us to hear the overgeneralizations and all-or-nothing thought processes better.



FFER

HELP



Warning Signs:

These thoughts or behaviors are noticeable signs that someone is struggling emotionally or considering suicide. Familiarizing yourself with these signs will help you notice them and find help quicker.

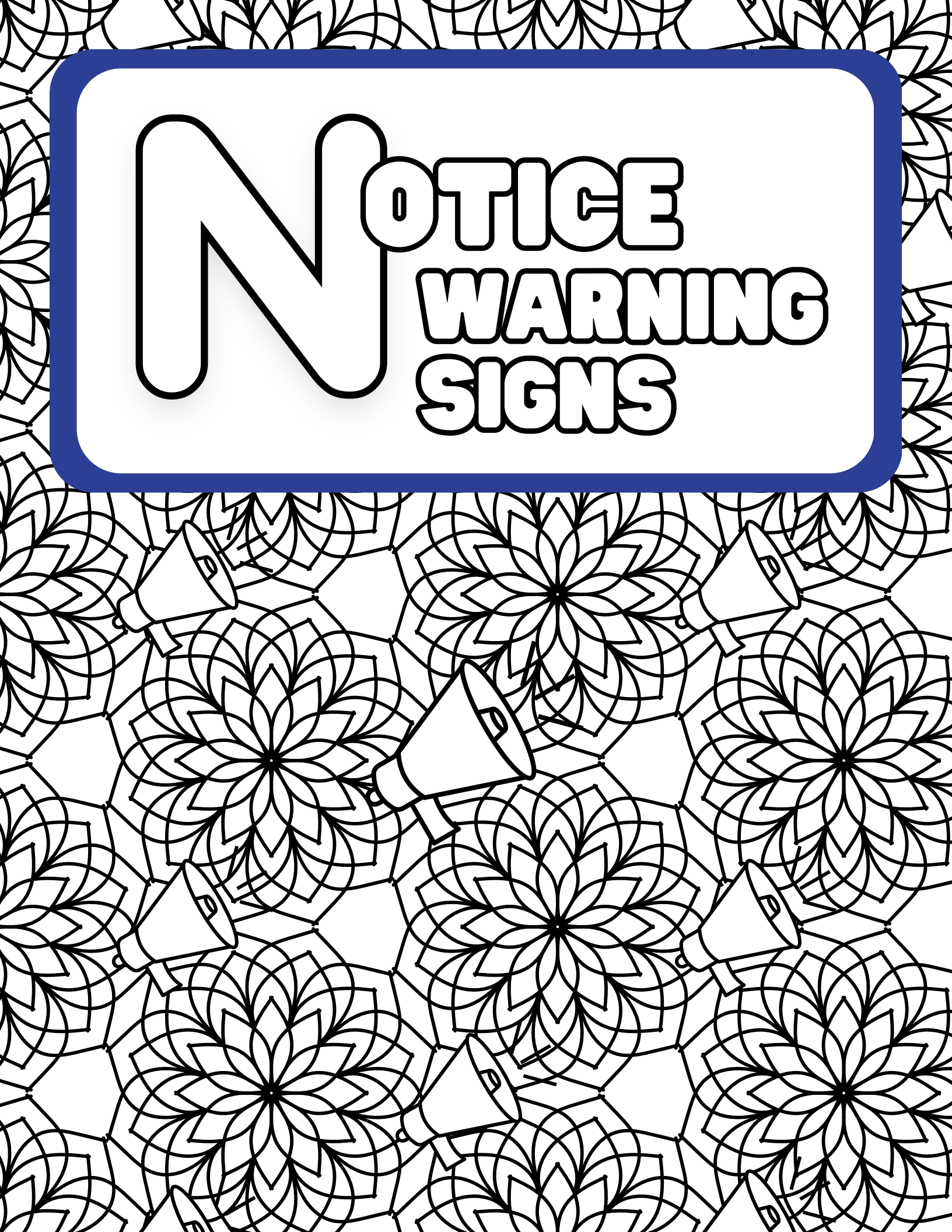
- Talking about wanting to die, great guilt or shame, or being a burden to others.
- Feeling empty, hopeless, sad, anxious, agitated, or full of rage.
- Making a plan or researching ways to die.
- Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will.

Helping Tools:

After recognizing warning signs, you need to decide how you can reasonably help. Here are some things you can do:

- Ask direct questions to get an idea of immediate risk.
- Try starting with “Some of the things you’ve said recently sound like stuff someone who has thoughts of suicide would say. Are you thinking about suicide?”
- Connect them to professional support if there are lingering or recurring suicidal thoughts.
- If you are waiting on help, stay calm. Engage in a mindfulness activity such as naming five things you can see, hear, taste, feel, and smell.

NOTICE WARNING SIGNS



Warning Signs:

Lack of connection and withdrawal can be signs of mental distress and suicide. Look out for these warning signs as a cry for connection:

- The person has a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. They might think previously enjoyable hobbies feel dull or uninteresting.
- When participating in social events or being around loved ones, the person may feel disconnected or unengaged.
- Meals or snacks that were once favorites may seem bland or unappetizing to the person.

Helping Tools:

Giving time and care to someone with mental distress and/or thoughts of suicide can be one of the first steps to help. Losing interest in activities that were once enjoyable can feed feelings of isolation and low motivation. Here are some things you can do to give time and care to yourself and others:

- Engage in regular physical activity, like a 10-15 minute walk.
- Create or help your friend form a daily routine to provide structure and stability. Start with something small like a five-minute stretch.
- Listen to uplifting music and move your body freely to the beat. Dancing with friends is a great way to pump up your mood!

The background of the entire image is a repeating pattern of black-outlined geometric shapes, specifically faceted polygons resembling diamonds or crystals, arranged in a grid-like fashion.

**GIVE YOUR
TIME & CARE**

Warning Signs:

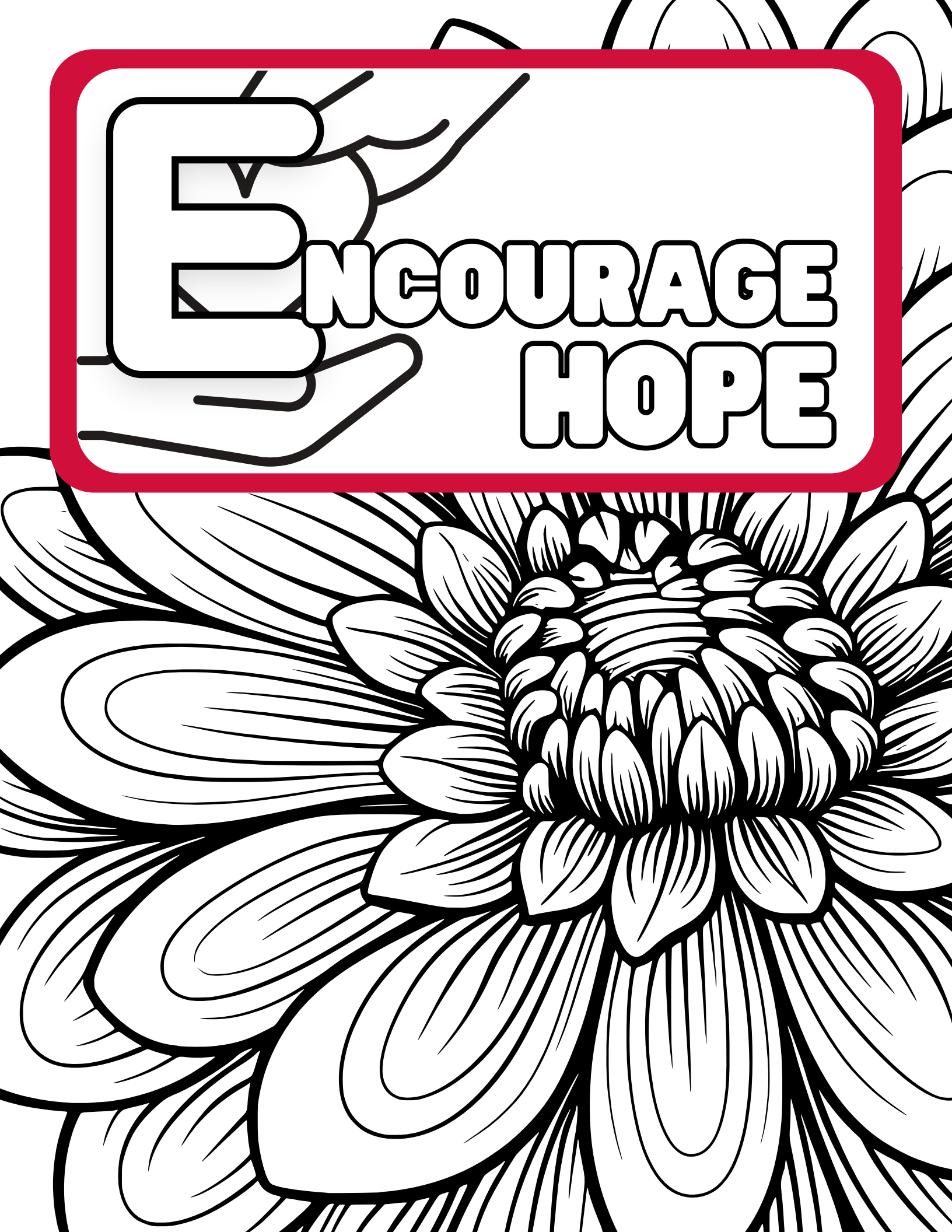
You or someone you know who may be struggling with mental distress or thoughts of suicide can have a hard time holding onto hope. Some thoughts or behaviors you may see or experience include:

- Thinking or talking about...
 - feeling like a burden to others,
 - the world is better off without them in it,
 - their need for help is inconveniencing, annoying, or frustrating others, and/or
 - a fear of rejection or dismissal.

Helping Tools:

Feeling like a burden to others can make it harder to reach out for support, and it can reinforce feelings of guilt or isolation. Here are some things you can do to encourage hope:

- Reassurance can go a long way! Make sure the person struggling with thoughts of suicide knows you care and aren't bothered or annoyed.
- Consider reaching out to other options when usual support is unavailable like,
 - dialing 9-8-8, or
 - the Wings Across Alabama Warm Line: 1-844-999-4647.



ENCOURAGE
HOPE

Warning Signs:

One set of warning signs of mental distress and/or thoughts of suicide can be extreme mood swings. Mood swings can be exhausting and confusing for both the person and those around them, and they can make connecting or seeking support more difficult. You can begin the process of responding compassionately by noticing warning signs like when a person has,

- a noticeable recent increase in agitation or irritability;
- sudden happiness or calm, especially after a period of depression or sadness; or
- anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context.

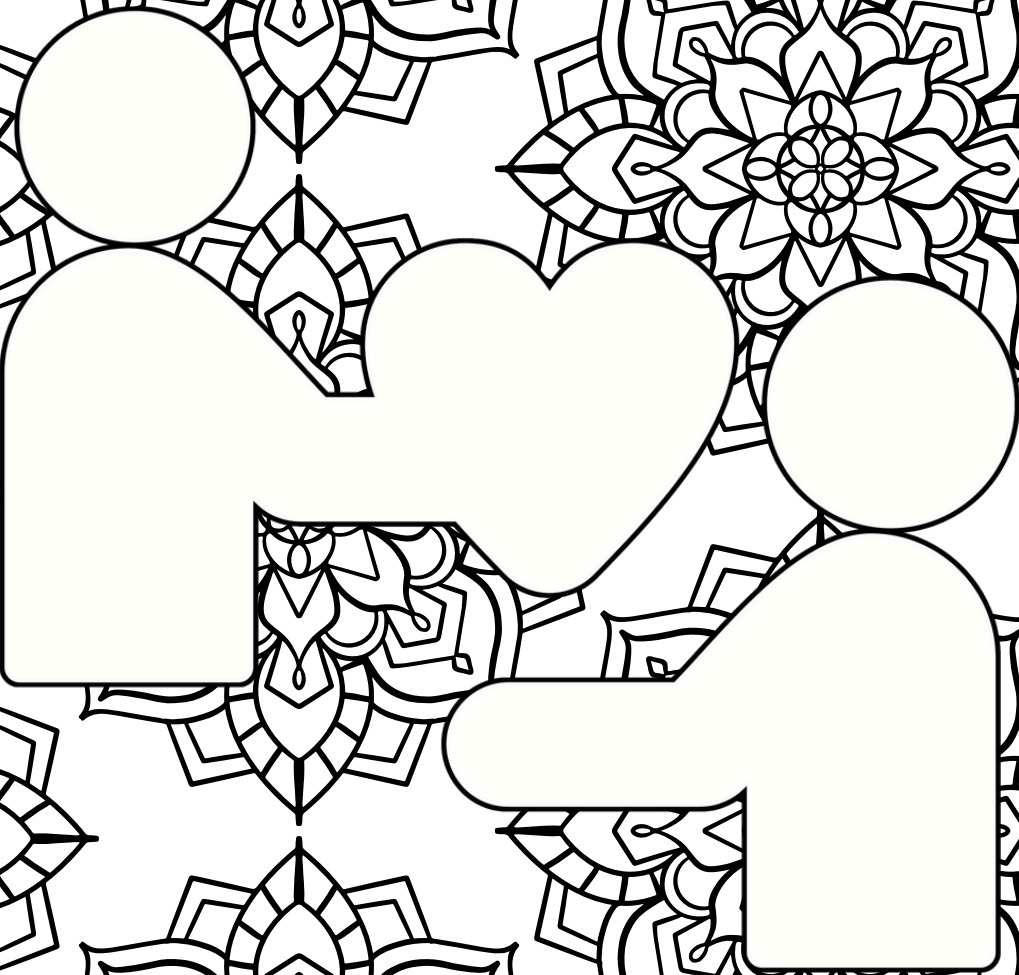
Helping Tools:

Here are some ways you can respond with compassion to someone experiencing emotional extremes:

- Don't react with fear, anger, or irritation. Instead, stay calm and listen carefully.
- Use kind words and a gentle tone with open body language to communicate care and support.
- Ask directly about thoughts of suicide.
- Help them get help.

A large, bold, black-outlined letter 'R' is positioned on the left. To its right, two stylized human figures are depicted in a hugging pose. The figures are simple black outlines with circular heads. The text 'RESPOND WITH COMPASSION' is written in a bold, black-outlined, sans-serif font, with 'RESPOND' on the top line and 'WITH COMPASSION' on the bottom line. The entire graphic is enclosed within a teal-colored rounded rectangle.

R
RESPOND WITH
COMPASSION



As you have worked through this book, you have reviewed key ideas for **becoming stronger together:**

- Support Each Other
- Talk Openly
- Respond to the Risk
- Offer Help
- Notice Warning Signs
- Give Time & Care
- Encourage Hope
- Respond with Compassion

These are all places where knowledge of the warning signs of mental distress and suicide can assist you or someone else in moving towards help—from a friend, family member, someone in the community, and/or a professional.

All of the helping tools in the book help build strength for yourself and those around you. Building strength, like any skill, takes time and consistency—but the effort is worth it! Some tips for building strength include:

- **Go back through the book** and make notes of the warning signs and helping tools that stood out to you.
- **Visit VitALalabama.com** for more information, training, and resources that can help you continue to build strength far into the future.
- **Check out the *Resource Page*** at the back of this coloring book for quick connections to additional support and resources.

S BUILD STRENGTH



Thanks for working through **STRONGER** with us!

We hope this has served as a gentle space to slow down, breathe, and learn how to grow stronger together. Even though you finished coloring, hopefully you'll reflect on the helping tools you learned along the way.

Please remember, although coloring is calming but not a substitute for care. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, reach out now. Don't wait.

988 is a quick resource to call or text. Calling or texting 988 is a great first step to finding help. More resources can be found on the next page.

If you enjoyed learning from this book and want to learn more, scan the top **QR code** on the *Resource Page* for training opportunities near you!

Resource Page



Scan the QR code to learn more about resources, training opportunities, and programs available in your area.



Dial 9-8-8 for immediate help with mental health crises.

- Dial 1 for veteran support.
- Dial 2 for Spanish support.



The Wings Across Alabama Warm Line is free, confidential non-crisis peer support. Dial 1-844-999-4647 to reach them 24/7.

The Connect Alabama application:

Browse through the app for information about mental health, substance use, prevention, treatment, and the latest information on behavioral health services located in your area.



Scan the top code to find the app in the Apple store.

Scan the bottom code to find the app in Google Play.





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