

# IS SOMEONE YOU KNOW AT RISK OF SUICIDE?

## What should I do if I am (or someone I know is) suicidal?

Take immediate action; talk to a doctor, contact an emergency service such as 24-hour emergency mental health phone line - 1800 655 085, Lifeline 13 11 14, suicide call back service 1300 659 467, Salvo Suicide Prevention & Crisis Line 1300 363 622

## What is the difference between suicide and self harm?

Self harm is an act of harm towards the body with the aim of changing a mental or emotional state. Death is not usually the intended outcome of self harm. Self harm may involve a physical act of hurting the body such as self-injury or it can be more subtle such as drug and alcohol abuse, or disordered eating. Some people use self-harm as a way of disconnecting from intense pain, others report using self harm to 'feel' the physical manifestation of emotional pain. Whilst there is a link between self harm and suicide, it can be difficult to determine the desired outcome when someone has intentionally hurt themselves. Suicide is an intentional act to end life, although most people do not want to die; they just want the pain that they are feeling to stop. This tip sheet provides some information on preventing suicide that may also be useful for people that self-harm.

## Why do some people attempt suicide?

There is no clear answer as to why someone attempts suicide because everybody's circumstances are different. Stress and depression may contribute to suicidal feelings. Stressful life events that may contribute to suicidal feelings include;

- Loss of a relationship.
- Family conflict.
- Experience of abuse or trauma such as domestic violence or sexual assault.
- Being close to someone who has attempted suicide.
- Trying to meet the expectations of family or a partner.
- Sudden change of circumstances such as a debilitating accident or loss of identity.
- Financial, educational or employment pressures

You or someone that you know may have considered suicide at some point. Warning signs of suicide may include;

- Talking, writing or drawing about suicide.
- Withdrawal from social events or avoidance of being around others.
- Planning a suicide, like hoarding pills, having a gun or a rope.
- Previous suicide attempts or increased self-harming behaviours such as increased drug or alcohol intake
- Acting dangerously - getting into risky, scary, dangerous situations - such as when driving.
- Signs of depression; not caring about appearance, angry outbursts, fighting, missing uni / work, being irritable, sudden changes in appetite, sleep patterns or behaviour.
- Making negative comments about themselves.
- Giving away possessions or making a will.
- Unexplained crying or no interest in the future or in things the person used to enjoy.
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness or being 'out of control'.
- Suddenly becoming cheerful after being really down for a long while.

Adapted from;

*The Suicide and Suicide Prevention in Australia - Breaking the Silence Report*

<http://www.suicideprevention.com.au>

Child and Youth Health SA website

<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=240&np=298&id=2061>

## What can I do to help myself?

There are some immediate things you can do to improve your current situation. Start by telling someone how you are feeling. When you share your worries with someone it is often a relief to know that you are no longer carrying the burden on your own. You may have to talk to a couple of different people before you find someone whom you trust and feel comfortable opening up to. It may be easier to contact a helpline and talk to someone anonymously about how you are feeling. Look at the websites and contact details on this tip sheet to find places where you can get information and support. It is a good idea to speak with a doctor because certain illnesses and even medications can mask the way that we are feeling and prevent us from seeing a situation clearly. It is very important that if you do not get support from someone, keep talking to others until you find someone that helps you to see that suicide is only one answer to a problem with many solutions.

## Seek professional help

Most people do not attempt suicide to die; they often just want a painful situation to end. The difficulty with making plans when you are distressed is that it is often difficult to think objectively and see all sides of a situation. Seeing a professional may help to check out your thoughts and consider some ways to stop the painful feelings. Some people may think that talking about suicide with a professional will result in hospitalisation. This is not necessarily the case, although a professional will most likely want to ensure that you are safe and that some plans can be put in place to take the pressure away for you.

## If someone you know has attempted suicide or died by suicide

It is common to experience thoughts such as 'why?', 'what could I have done to stop this?', 'if only....' 'Why didn't I see this coming?' Everybody experiences grief differently. You could speak with a counsellor about how you are feeling and explore issues such as sadness, hurt, guilt, or shame. If you are concerned about someone who you think may be suicidal it is a good idea to recruit some help. The following websites offer some excellent tips on how to support someone that you think may be suicidal.

<http://www.suicideprevention.com.au/main/?id=4>

<http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/if-your-friend-threatens-to-take-their-own-life>

## Where can I get help from others?

- Talk to a counsellor at the Newcastle campus (4921 5801) or at the Central Coast campus (4348 4060).
- Make an appointment to see your doctor.
- Lifeline 131 114 offers a 24-hour service.
- The Psychiatric Emergency Centre (1 800 655 085) for the Hunter region or the Central Intake (4320 3500) for the Central Coast area are 24-hour services.
- Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 24-hour service.
- Lifeline has an information line 'Just Ask' Mon-Fri 9am-5pm (1 300 131 114).
- Men's Helpline Australia is staffed by trained male counsellors experienced in helping men who find it difficult to talk about issues (1 300 78 99 78).

## What other resources are available?

### Websites:

<http://www.readthesigns.com.au/>

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2007/pdf/980025\\_after\\_suicide.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2007/pdf/980025_after_suicide.pdf)

<http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au>

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

<http://www.suicideprevention.com.au/>

<http://www.ruokday.com.au/content/home.aspx>