

In some situations the person may refuse to get help. While it's important that you help them find help, you can't force them to accept it. You need to ensure that the appropriate people are aware of the situation. Do not shoulder this responsibility alone.

8. Ask For a Promise

Thoughts of suicide often return and when they do it is important for the person to again reach out and tell someone. Asking them to promise to do this makes it more likely that they will actually seek help.

9. Look After Yourself

If you're helping someone who is considering suicide, make sure you also take care of yourself. It is difficult and emotionally draining to support someone who is suicidal, especially over an extended period. Don't do it on your own. Find someone to talk to, maybe friends, family or a professional.

10. Stay Involved

Thoughts of suicide do not easily disappear without the person at risk experiencing some change in their life or personal circumstances. Their situation, or their feelings about it may change, or they may feel more supported and able to deal with it. In either situation, the continuing involvement of family and friends is very important.

Suicidal thoughts do not easily go away on their own. People need help to overcome these thoughts. Your help can make all the difference.

WHERE TO GET HELP

For immediate crisis intervention when life may be in danger ring the police on 000 or go to your local hospital emergency department.

24-HOUR CRISIS TELEPHONE COUNSELLING SERVICE

National

Lifeline 13 11 14
Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800
SANE Helpline 1800 18 7263
Mensline Australia 1300 78 9978

WEB SITES:

www.headspace.org.au
www.sane.org
www.lifeline.org.au
www.kidshelpline.com.au
www.reachout.com.au
www.beyondblue.org.au
www.mensline.org.au

LIFE
livingisforeveryone.com.au

HELPING SOMEONE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

Are you concerned that someone close to you is considering taking their own life?

Would you like to know how to help them keep safe?



This brochure has been produced with content provided by Lifeline's mental health information service Just ask and the 'Tool Kit for helping someone at risk of suicide'. www.lifeline.org.au 13 11 14.



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



WHY DOES SOMEONE CONSIDER SUICIDE?

It is distressing to realise that someone close to you may be considering taking their own life. If you believe someone is thinking about ending their life it's natural to feel panic or even want to avoid thinking about it. People considering suicide often feel very isolated and alone. They may feel that nobody can help them or understand their psychological pain. When unable to see any other way of dealing with pain, it may seem to be the only way out. Sometimes people who have been distressed and openly suicidal become outwardly calm. Be aware that this may mean many things, including their quiet resolution to complete their suicide plan. The important thing to remember is that if someone is not their usual self or if they are showing signs that arouse your concern you need to check it out.

Typically, many factors are involved. Some clues to look for include:

- Someone experiencing significant life changes, such as recent loss (a loved one, a job, an income/livelihood), a major disappointment (relationship breakdown, failed exams, missed job promotions) or a mental illness.
- Someone exhibiting behaviour change, being moody, sad and withdrawn, talking of feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless, taking less care of themselves and their appearance, expressing thoughts about death through drawings, stories, songs, etc, saying goodbye to others and/or giving away possessions or engaging in risky or self-destructive behaviour.

Living is for everyone

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Most people who consider taking their own lives get through the crisis. The help and support of family, friends and professionals can make a big difference. The following tips will help you know what to do.

1. Do Something Now

If you are concerned that someone you know is considering suicide, act promptly. Don't assume that they will get better without help or that they will seek help on their own. Reaching out now could save a life.

2. Acknowledge Your Reaction

Your natural reaction may be to panic, ignore the situation and hope it will go away, or look for quick-fix solutions to make the person feel better.

These reactions are common. If you find you're really struggling, enlist the help of a trusted friend.

3. Be There For Them

Spend time with the person and express your care and concern. Ask them how they are feeling, and listen to what's on their mind. Let them do most of the talking. Problems can seem more manageable after speaking about them.

4. Ask If They Are Thinking Of Suicide

The only way to know if a person is thinking about suicide is to ask. It can often be a relief for people to be asked about what they are feeling. Asking can sometimes be very hard but it shows that you have noticed things, been listening, that you care and that they are not on their own. Talking about suicide will not put the idea into their head but will encourage them to talk about their feelings. Don't agree to keep their suicidal thoughts or plans a secret.

5. Check Out Their Safety

If a person is considering taking their own life it is important to know how much thought they have put into it. You could ask about the following:

- Have they thought about how and when they plan to kill themselves?
- Do they have the means to carry out their plan?
- What support can they access to stay safe and get help?
- How can you help them draw on links to family, friends, pets, religious convictions, personal coping strengths?

If you are really worried, don't leave the person alone. Remove any means of suicide available, including weapons, medications, alcohol and other drugs, even access to a car.

6. Decide What To Do

Now that you have this information you need to discuss together what steps you are going to take. You may need to enlist the help of others to persuade the person to get professional help - or at least take the first steps to stay safe. These may include their partners, parents, or close friends. Only by sharing this information can you make sure that the person gets the help and support they need.

7. Take Action

The person can get help from a range of professional and supportive people:

- General Practitioner
- Counsellor, psychologist, social worker
- School counsellor, youth group leader
- Emergency services-police and ambulance
- Mental health services
- Community health centres
- Priest, minister, religious leader
- Telephone counselling services such as Lifeline and Kids Help Line.

When the person has decided who they are most willing to tell, help them prepare what they will say. Offer to accompany the person to the appointment. After the appointment, that they raised the issue of suicide and ask what help they were offered. Help them follow through with the recommendations.