

What Are:

The Warning Signs?

Most people who feel suicidal don't necessarily want to die, they just want an end to their pain. These are some of the signs which may indicate that someone is thinking of taking their life:

- A previous suicide attempt or act of self-harm
- Expressing suicidal thoughts
- Preoccupation with death
- Depression
- Becoming isolated
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug abuse
- Sudden changes in mood or behaviour
- Making 'final' arrangements, e.g. giving away possessions (such as books, CDs, DVDs)

Associated Risk Factors?

- Access to a method of suicide, e.g. medication, firearms
- Loss of someone close (such as a friend or family member)
- Relationship break-up
- Impulsiveness, recklessness and risk-taking behaviour
- Alcohol / drug abuse
- Seek to understand what the subject's loss is because if you do you will understand why the crisis has happened. LOSS=CRISIS

Note: Some of these warning signs and risk factors can be associated with everyday behaviour and should be looked at in context with the overall picture of the person you are concerned about. However, the more warning signs and risk factors, the higher the possible risk.

REMEMBER

STAY SAFE.

REMAIN CALM.

BE THEIR FRIEND.

YOU ONLY HAVE ONE CHANCE TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION; MAKE IT POSITIVE.

TRY TO REDUCE/REMOVE ANY THREATS.

SHOW YOU'RE LISTENING, SUMMARISE AND

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ALLOW SILENCES .

ESTABLISH WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST 24 HOURS.

EMPHASISE POSITIVE OPTIONS.

SUGGEST OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT.

TODAY, YOU CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

Helpline numbers which may be of use after immediate danger has been removed

The Samaritans	08457 90 90 90	24 hours
Childline	0800 1111	24hours
Shelterline	0808 8004444	24 hours
National Drug Helpline	0800 776600	24 hours
Alcohol Anonymous	08457 697555	11am-11pm
Relate	0300 100 1234	

Crisis Intervention and Potential Suicide Avoidance

Voluntary Sector

SAVING LIVES: a guide to suicide intervention

The following guidelines are provided for untrained negotiators to provide an initial response and assessment. How you initially respond to the situation will set the tone for the incident.

Strategy

Save life, buy time and gain information.

Ensure the safety of all involved and achieve a peaceful resolution with minimum disruption to local communities.

REMEMBER

Death is a permanent solution to what might be a temporary problem. Take your time and

NEVER STOP TRYING.

Do:

Think personal safety.

Take the threat seriously.

Ask the subject to remove or reduce any immediate danger.

Discourage them from continual alcohol or drug abuse.

If it is unclear to you whether the person is suicidal or not, ask them. Do not be afraid to use the words *suicide* or *death*.

Talk openly about the finality of death. Stress that suicide is only one of many alternatives.

If they admit to feeling suicidal, encourage them to talk about their thoughts and feelings, and the root causes.

Allow them to vent their anger, feelings and emotions. Listen to what they are saying as it often contains the key issues.

Try and get them to think of ways forward focusing on positives.

Find the focus of the problem then find the hook – reason to live.

Explore what is meaningful to the subject and try to get them to tell you *what keeps them going*.

Allow silences.

Listen carefully to what they say and how they say it.

Express personal concern and empathy but avoid the phrase *I understand what you are going through*.

Expect the person to have *ups and downs*.

Call 999 for police assistance.

Do Not:

Do not grab the individual; this is placing yourself in severe danger.

Do not create a theatre of stress and tension. Keep it quiet and keep on-lookers as far back as possible.

Do not go along with *last wishes*, final demands or *verbal wills* - it's better to keep open some *unfinished business*.

Do not lie. Be honest with them at all times. They need to trust you before progress can be made.

Do not judge or criticise the subject or their situation.

Do not use a friend, family member or a third party until they can be properly assessed by a trained negotiator. They may be part of the problem and the subject may wish to commit suicide in their presence.

Until the trained negotiator arrives, maintain contact with the person and keep encouraging their return to a safe location.

Telephone negotiation:

Ensure you have their telephone number in case you must ring back.

Ensure the subject has your telephone number.

Be alert for phrases/sentences implying suicide.

If they want to hang up attempt to keep the subject on the telephone.

If they refuse to stay on the line try to gain a promise that they won't hurt themselves.

If they insist on hanging up try to get them to agree a time to ring back.

Myths About Suicide:

MYTH: Once a person has made a serious suicide attempt, that person is unlikely to make another.

FACT: People who have attempted to kill themselves are significantly more likely to eventually die by suicide than the rest of the population.

MYTH: If a person is serious about killing themselves then there is nothing you can do.

FACT: Feeling suicidal is often a temporary state of mind. Whilst someone may feel low or distressed for a sustained period, the actual suicidal crisis can be relatively short term. This is what makes your intervention and support so important.

MYTH: Talking about suicide is a bad idea as it may give someone the idea to try it.

FACT: When someone feels suicidal they often do not want to worry or frighten others and so do not talk about the way they feel. By asking directly about suicide you give them permission to tell you how they feel. People who have been through such a crisis will often say that it was a huge relief to be able to talk about their suicidal thoughts. Once someone starts talking they have a greater chance of discovering other options to suicide.

MYTH: People who threaten suicide are just attention seeking and shouldn't be taken seriously.

FACT: People may well talk about their feelings because they want support in dealing with them. In this sense it may be that they do indeed want attention, in which case, giving that attention may save their life.

MYTH: People who are suicidal want to die.

FACT: The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die; they do not want to live the life they have. The distinction may seem small but is in fact very important and is why talking through other options at the right time is so vital.