

Suicide

Helping identify someone who feels suicidal

Online and helplines list

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What is suicidal Ideation?

Suicidal ideation refers to thinking about, considering, or planning suicide.

In addition to suicidal ideation, there are other warning signals that suggest suicide risk as well as the possible presence of a mental or physical illness. Of particular concern are signs and symptoms that represent changes from a person's conventional or normal behaviour, appearance, and functioning.

Additional warning signs of suicide can include:

- decreased performance in school or work
- an unusual desire for social isolation
- a significant decrease in self-esteem
- increased emotionality (expressed as anger, agitation, anxiety, hopelessness, sadness, or similar emotion)
- a sudden decrease in emotionality; particularly, a movement from depression or agitation to remarkable and uncharacteristic calm
- uncharacteristic behaviours or emotions
- uncharacteristic carelessness concerning personal safety
- increased drug and/or alcohol use
- losing interest in things that someone used to enjoy
- failing to take prescribed medications or follow required diets
- preparing for death by getting one's affairs "in order"

Excessive behavioural changes in any direction (e.g., towards agitation or calmness) beyond what might normally be expected following a loss or emotional insult are worth pointing out and exploring with a potentially suicidal person.

For example, people who are recovering from depression should be watched for possible suicide warning signs during their recovery. An increase in their energy level can provide the impetus to act upon suicide thoughts they've been nursing while depressed but were too fatigued to do anything about.

Similarly, sudden and uncharacteristic calm after a period of depression or anxiety can come on as a result of people having made the decision to take their lives. People may become calm because they believe that their impending death will finally solve their overwhelming problems.

Similarly, any person who suddenly begins arranging their affairs and "tying up loose ends" (e.g., giving their things away) or inexplicably makes plans to move after having experienced a period of depression and struggle may actually be planning suicide.

In talking about such changes with a potentially suicidal person, remember that your concern will in some cases represent a false positive concern; there may be no actual suicidality present. It is important to follow up nevertheless, given how important it is to identify actual suicidal intent before it progresses towards an actual suicidal attempt.

Suicidality generally progresses from idea, to plan, to actual attempt. Once suicidal people have decided to end their lives, they will generally start assembling a "suicide kit" by gathering those necessary tools and ingredients to accomplish their goal. For instance, people who have decided to overdose themselves on pills may start stockpiling medicine. Attempts to obtain tools that might be used for suicide can also become a warning sign for significant suicide risk, although one that is difficult to spot as many such tools are common household items.

People whose level of suicidality has progressed to the point where they are presently engaged in assembling the means of their suicide are in real danger of harming themselves. If you observe someone possibly assembling the means to end his or her life, that person's suicide risk level has become extremely high. The time to ask about suicidality is right now. The time to take them to your nearest A and E department can also be now.

Warning signs for suicide are not typically obvious and can be very difficult to spot in advance. If you are reading this information after your friend or family member has already attempted or committed suicide, don't beat yourself up if you missed what now seem like obvious warning signs. "Hindsight is always 20/20" as the saying goes. It is usually far easier to recognise warning signs in retrospect than to catch them prior to a suicide attempt being made. You are not stupid, insensitive, and/or clueless if you didn't know that someone was suicidal. Even the best trained mental health professionals can miss some suicidal warning signs, particularly if those signs are very subtle

Suicide Help Lines

Samaritans – for everyone

Call 116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

Call 0800 58 58 58 – 5pm to midnight every day

Visit the webchat page

<https://www.thecalmzone.net/issues/suicide/>

Papyrus – for people under 35

Call 0800 068 41 41 – 9am to midnight every day

Text 07860 039967

Email pat@papyrus-uk.org

SOS Silence of Suicide – for everyone

Call 0300 1020 505 – 4pm to midnight every day

Message a text line

If you do not want to talk to someone over the phone, these text lines are open 24 hours a day, every day

Text “SHOUT” to 85258

Website:

<https://giveusashout.org/>