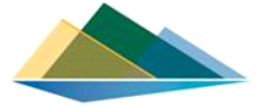


#worriedaboutsucide
#publichealth5-19service



WORRIED ABOUT SUICIDE FACTSHEET

This factsheet will provide you with information and advice about what to do if you are worried that your child is thinking about suicide and links to helpful websites.

Help for parents / carers who may be worried about their child:

This information has been collated using advice from the Samaritans and Young minds.

There isn't one way of behaving if a person feels suicidal – it will be different for everyone – some people act no differently and disguise how they are feeling whilst others might seem completely out of character.

Due to the number of changes they are going through, both hormonally and in life, young people can be particularly vulnerable to feeling suicidal. They can feel very scared of the future, anxious about career and academic pressures, overwhelmed by worries about personal relationships and sexuality, and can feel pressurised by peers into risky behaviour, including or drug and alcohol abuse.

Signs of distress may include:

- Appearing exhausted with no energy
- A change in sleep pattern; much more or much less **but especially waking up early**
- A change in eating behaviour; much more or much less
- Physical illnesses like unexplained headaches or stomach aches
- Reduced self-care and not taking care of their appearance.
- Appearing to be tearful, upset, irritable, anxious, panicked or unable to concentrate
- Asking things like 'what's the point?' and appearing hopeless
- Avoiding social situations and spending time alone
- Avoidance of work or school or reduced performance at work or school
- Taking alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings
- Triggers recently in life such as breaking up with a partner, failing exams, moving away, any major life event
- Self-harm behaviour (not always linked but people who self-harm are at higher risk)
- Talking about suicide. It's a myth that people who talk about suicide don't go through with it. In fact, most people who have taken their own lives have spoken about it to someone
- A distinct change of behaviour. Someone may appear to be calm and at peace for the first time or, more often, may be withdrawn and have difficulty communicating.

If a young person gets the help and treatment they need, the risk of suicide can be greatly reduced. If you suspect that a young person is feeling suicidal, it is extremely important to talk to them about it and try to get professional help. Start by seeing your GP and asking for advice. As a parent/carer, it can be extremely difficult to cope if your child has attempted suicide or is talking about suicide and it is advisable to find support for you too - see below for organisations who can help.

What can you do to help?

- **Ask them how they are feeling.** Talking about suicide does not make it more likely to happen. Asking the person directly about suicide allows them to tell you how they feel. People who have felt suicidal will often say what a huge relief it is to be able to talk about what they're experiencing. Try to be patient if they are angry or refuse to talk. If they won't talk to you, maybe they would talk to a friend or sibling. It may be that writing things down is an easier way for them to communicate with you
- **Listen** - this is the most important thing you can do. Treat them with respect, and try not to be judgmental or critical. Is it important to try to raise their self-esteem
- **Empathise** by showing that you really do care about them, no matter what, and are trying to understand things from their point of view. Words don't always matter. The touch of a hand or a hug can go a long way to show that you care
- **Reassure** them that desperate feelings are very common and can be overcome. Things can and do change, help can be found and there is hope for the future
- Try to **give practical support**, and help them to cope with any extra pressures. It may not be possible to deal with all the things that are troubling them, but between you agree on what you will do if a suicidal crisis happens or happens again. If they are living away encourage them to come home for a visit or go to see them yourself. This will give you an opportunity to assess the situation
- Be clear **there are always other options**, e.g. if they are at University they can: leave the course for good, have a break from the course and defer a year or change to a university nearer home

DON'T

- Put them down or do things that might make them feel worse. A suicide attempt suggests that self-esteem is already very low
- Abandon or reject them in any way
- Your help, support and attention are vital if they are to begin to feel that life is worth living again. Don't relax your attentions just because they seem to be better. It doesn't mean that life is back to normal for them yet. They may be at risk for quite a while
- Nag - although it may be well meant
- Nobody wants to be pestered all the time. Don't intrude - try to balance being watchful with a respect for privacy
- Ignore what has happened
- Criticise their actions - however you may be feeling about a suicide attempt, try to remember the pain and turmoil that they were, and may still be, going through. Don't take their behaviour personally - it is not necessarily directed at you

If you feel that the situation is getting worse rather than better, and you are worried about another suicide attempt, trust your instinct and share your concerns straight away. Contact the GP, or any health professional who has already been involved. Unless the young person has given permission, these people may not be able to discuss confidential details with you, but they will want to listen to what you are saying as your input may play a vital part in the young person's recovery.

VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.cumbriapartnership.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health/our-mental-health-services/child-adolescent-mental-health-services

Cumbria Partnership NHS webpage for information about Cumbria's child and adolescent mental health service

www.kooth.com

Free online counselling and support for children aged 11-18

www.samaritans.org/

Samaritans is a unique charity dedicated to reducing feelings of isolation and disconnection that can lead to suicide, the website provides information and helpline details

www.papyrus.org.uk/

Papyrus Prevention of Young Suicide Charity. Provides confidential help and advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person

www.thecalmzone.net/

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) was set up to reduce the high suicide rate among young men. Provides a website and helpline

www.cwmt.org.uk/

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust Raises has lot of information and resources to help equip young people to look after their mental well being

www.childline.org.uk/

Childline website provides information & advice for children

www.youngminds.org.uk/

Youngminds website provides help and information for both young people and parents worried about a child or young person's behaviour or mental health