

Real Talk

Conversations That Save Lives



GRASSROOTS
SUICIDE PREVENTION

Our vision is a future where more lives are saved from suicide.

Grassroots Suicide Prevention have lived experience of suicide. We know what it is like to be in crisis. We understand the pressure of trying to keep someone safe and the complex emotions including guilt, shock, and intense grief after a suicide.

We empower people to help save lives from suicide through connecting, educating, and campaigning nationally.

Educating

We offer bespoke consultation and training courses, co-designed to support individuals, organisations, and communities to develop the skills to help save lives.

Connecting

We listen, connect, and provide support through our Stay Alive app, tools, and resources to help keep people safe from suicide.

Campaigning

We raise awareness and funds to remove the stigma around suicide and keep more people safe from suicide. We campaign on the ground and influence at a strategic level.

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First Hand

First Hand is an online resource for anyone affected by witnessing a suicide, when they did not know the person who has died. This may be because they happened to be at a particular location, or because their job involves responding to these incidents.

www.first-hand.org.uk

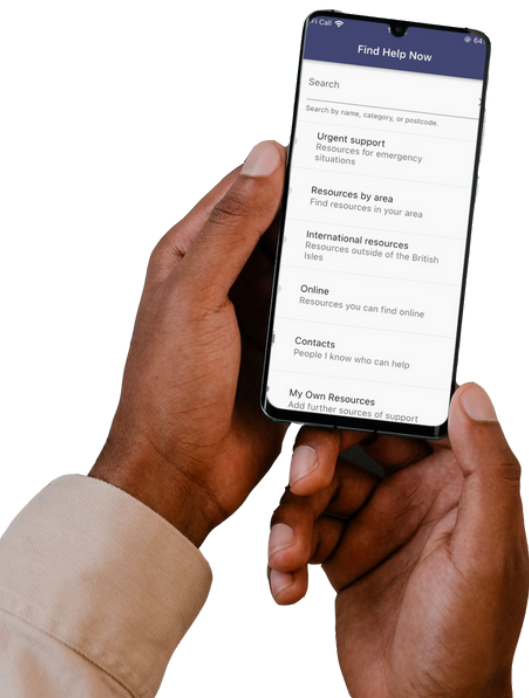


Stay Alive

The Stay Alive app is a pocket suicide prevention resource for the UK, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else considering suicide.

In addition to the resources, the app includes a safety plan, customisable reasons for living, and a life box where you can store photos and videos.

www.stayalive.app



Real Talk: interactive film

Real Talk is our interactive film which helps guide the viewer, as they make choices to support someone who is suicidal.

The film presents an unfolding conversation between two flatmates, Guidance is offered, and key principles explained, increasing the skills and confidence of the viewer in responding to people at risk of suicide.

www.prevent-suicide.org.uk/realtalkfilm



Myths & Facts About Suicide

Myth

Asking someone about suicide will put the idea in their head and make them more likely to kill themselves.

Talking about suicide is attention seeking behaviour.

Thinking about suicide is rare and unusual.

People who talk about suicide aren't serious and won't go through with it.

If a person is serious about killing themselves then there's nothing you can do.

You have to be mentally ill to think about suicide.

People who are suicidal want to die

Fact

It is safer to ask about suicide than not to ask about suicide. Many people find relief in being able to talk about it

Anyone considering suicide needs serious attention.

Anyone has the potential to have thoughts of suicide.

People often tell someone: that they do not feel life is worth living, that they have no future or they want to die. 40% of people who die by suicide had told someone of their intention beforehand.

Feeling actively suicidal is usually temporary, even if someone has been feeling low, anxious or struggling to cope for a long period of time.

1 in 5 people have thought about suicide at some time in their life. However, many people who die by suicide do experience mental ill-health which is not always recognised and supported.

The majority of people who feel suicidal do not want to die; they want to end their pain.

Suicide statistics worldwide

- Close to 800,000 people die due to suicide every year, which is one person every 40 seconds. (WHO, 2019)
- Suicide is a global phenomenon; 79% of suicides occurred in low- and middle-income countries in 2016. (WHO, 2019)

Suicide statistics UK

- The most recent data shows there were 5,224 suicides registered in England and Wales in 2020, around 10 deaths per 100,000 people. (ONS 2021)
- Rates vary across the UK, with the highest rate in 2018 observed in Northern Ireland (18.6 deaths per 100,000), followed by Scotland (16.1 deaths per 100,000 people), then Wales (12.8 deaths per 100,000 people) and England (10.3 deaths per 100,000 people) (ONS, 2019)
- Overall, men accounted for three-quarters of UK deaths by suicide in 2018 (ONS, 2019)
- One in five people in the UK have suicidal thoughts, one in fifteen will attempt suicide and it's estimated in England and Wales, at least 140,000 people go to hospital each year having attempted suicide.
- 50% of people who died by suicide had self-harmed in the last year. (Foster et al., 1997)
- There are strong links between deprivation and suicide (Samaritans, 2018)
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for under 35s (ONS, 2019)



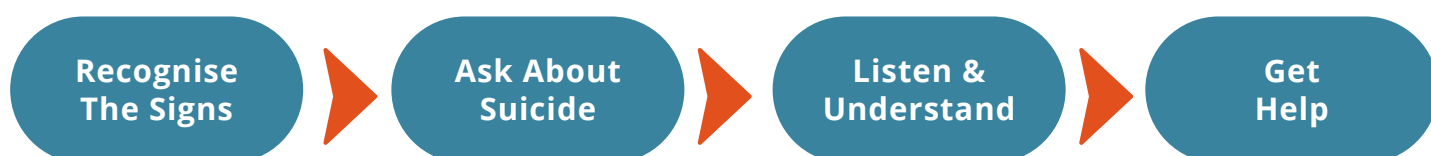
How do we talk about suicide?

Certain ways of talking about suicide can alienate members of the community, sensationalise the issue or inadvertently contribute to suicide being presented as glamorous or an option for dealing with problems.

We need to ensure we are not “too afraid” to talk about suicide as a community, while respecting and understanding the risks in certain situations.

What to say	Avoid saying	Why?
'non-fatal' or 'made an attempt on their life'	'unsuccessful suicide'	To avoid presenting suicide as a desired outcome or glamourising a suicide attempt.
'took their own life', 'died by suicide' or 'ended their own life'	'successful suicide'	To avoid presenting suicide as a desired outcome.
'died by suicide' or 'ended their own life'	'committed' or 'commit suicide'	To avoid association between suicide and 'crime' or 'sin' that may alienate.
'survived a suicide attempt'	'Failed suicide attempt'	To avoid insensitive language
'concerning rates of suicide'	'suicide epidemic'	To avoid sensationalism and inaccuracy.
Are you thinking of suicide?	'You're not thinking of hurting yourself, are you?'	To avoid unclear and judgemental language

To help us support someone at risk, we can use the following steps:



What things might we observe in someone having thoughts of suicide?

Anyone has the potential to have thoughts of suicide. While certain groups do have a statistically higher likelihood of dying by suicide, if we only focus on those groups, we miss all the other individuals who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide. We may notice the following:

Talk

"I just can't stand the pain anymore"

"I know everyone would be better off without me"

"I'm so trapped – I can't see any other way out of this"

"I don't have any reason to go on anymore. There's no point"

"I'm going to end it all"

Behaviour

Withdrawal from activities

Increased use of alcohol and or drugs

Acting recklessly

Looking for a way to kill themselves, online for materials or means

Sleeping too much, too little

Isolating from family and friends

Saying goodbye

Giving away possessions

Mood

Depression, low mood

Loss of interest in things, places, or people they usually enjoy

Irritability, rage

Humiliation, shame

Anxiety

Sudden unexplained recovery

Sometimes the potential warning signs can be very subtle. A person thinking about suicide may appear to be okay, or even cheerful. Sometimes, particularly if someone has been ill for a long time with depression, making a decision to die by suicide can bring them some relief and their mood can appear to improve. We should be alert to changes in someone's behaviour, and to help someone talk about how they are feeling.

It's important to be honest if you are worried about someone. Tell them what your concerns are and let them know that you care about them. Give them time and space to talk about how they are feeling right now. Tell them what your concerns are and let them know that you care about them.



We don't often talk about suicide so it might seem a little daunting to start a conversation about it, but it's important to remember you don't have to be an expert.

Suicide prevention is everybody's business. Anyone can learn to support someone who is suicidal. Caring enough to get involved can make a real difference to someone's life.

If you feel that this person may be considering suicide, ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide.

This can be a daunting question, but it is safe to ask and helps both of you to be clear about the situation.

Asking about suicide shows that you care enough to want to know how someone really is and gives them permission to talk honestly about a difficult and stigmatised subject.



When we ask someone if they are thinking about suicide, it is important to be clear. Using language like 'doing something stupid' can be stigmatising and make the person defensive. When asking, make sure there is no ambiguity, that the person knows exactly what you mean.

Talking about suicide to someone who is already thinking about it will not increase their risk, it will open up a conversation that could save their life. If someone is not thinking about suicide they will tell you. It is better to ask and be rebuffed than to miss an opportunity to save a life.

"I can't take this anymore, it's unbearable and I can't carry on. Everyone will be better off when I'm gone..."

Sometimes when people...

say things like 'I can't carry on' are going through things like this feel depressed or overwhelmed

**...they are thinking of suicide.
Are you thinking about suicide?**

Research shows that it is not dangerous to ask. If the answer is yes, the person with thoughts of suicide can be supported. If the answer is no, no harm has been done. People often find great relief in being able to openly talk about their thoughts and feelings about suicide.

Other ways to frame the question

"Have things got so bad that you are thinking about suicide?"

"The things you've been saying make me wonder if you're thinking about suicide. Is that how you're feeling right now?"

"Sometimes when people talk this way, they're thinking about suicide - are you thinking about suicide?"

Listen & Understand

For most people feeling suicidal is an experience that lasts for a limited time. Research shows that the most intense periods of feeling suicidal will change after around 24 hours.

Our thoughts and feelings can change from moment to moment, hour to hour. With help and support a person's feelings about life and suicide can change.

The most important thing you can do is help someone to talk about their thoughts and feelings about suicide, and try to understand how they feel. You can also help them to get crisis support if they need it. You might be part of the process of helping somebody choose to stay alive but ultimately they need to do part of this work too.



How might we help someone feel listened to?

Encourage open conversation: Someone who's suicidal may feel ashamed, guilty or embarrassed, which can be a barrier to talking. Let them know it's okay to talk.

Be respectful and acknowledge their feelings: Avoid trying to talk the person out of their feelings or express shock, they aren't thinking logically but their emotions are real.

Avoid patronising or being judgmental: "Things could be worse" or "You have everything to live for." Instead, ask open questions such as, "What's causing you to feel so bad?" "What would make you feel better?" or "How can I help?"

Offer hope that things can get better: When someone is suicidal, it seems as if nothing will make things better. Reassure the person that with treatment, they can develop other ways to cope and can feel better about life again.

Suggest avoiding or limiting alcohol and drug use: If the person can't stop on their own, offer to help find treatment

Ask about a suicide plan: Ensure the person doesn't have items around that could be used for suicide. If they take medication that could be used for overdose, encourage them to have someone safeguard it to give it as prescribed

How to get help

In an emergency

If the person has taken steps to end their life or is in immediate danger:

Call 999 or go to your nearest A&E department

In a non-emergency

If the person is safe for now and not in immediate danger:

"Let's find someone who can help and talk to them together."

It's OK if you don't know how to get help; the resources listed below can get you started. Find out what kind of help they would appreciate - it might be a professional service or someone they know. Help them stay safe while help is being arranged.

Connecting them with a GP or NHS service is a great first step. You can also consider informal resources – friends, family, neighbours.

Crisis Resources



Samaritans offer listening and support to people and communities in times of need. People can call, email or write a letter. Call 116 123



PAPYRUS provide confidential support and advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person through their Hopeline 0800 068 4141



If a person is experiencing a mental health issue or supporting someone else, they can call SANEline on 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm–10.30pm)



Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM). Anyone experiencing suicidal distress can call CALM on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight every day) or use their webchat service



Nightline offers a database students can search to see if their university or college offers a night-time listening service. Nightline phone operators are all students too.



SHOUT offers confidential 24/7 crisis text support for times when a person needs immediate assistance. Text "SHOUT" to 85258 or visit Shout Crisis Text Line



Mind provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health issue. They campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.



Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline is a safe space for anyone to discuss anything, including sexuality, gender identity, sexual health and emotional wellbeing.



The MIX is a crisis messenger text service providing free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. If a person is aged 25 or under, and are in crisis, they can text THEMIX to 85258

To find out more about our life-saving training or how you can support our work please visit:

www.prevent-suicide.org.uk



The information in this booklet is correct at the time it was printed (August 2022).

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