



THEME OF THE MONTH
JANUARY 2022

**SUICIDE
AWARENESS**



UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE

The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 1 million people die each year from suicide. It may be hard for many of us to understand what drives so many individuals to take their own lives. But a suicidal person is in so much pain that they can see no other option.

Suicide is a desperate attempt to escape suffering that has become unbearable. Overwhelmed by feelings of self-loathing, hopelessness, and isolation, a suicidal person can not see any other way of finding relief except through death. However, despite their need for the pain to stop, most suicidal people are deeply conflicted about ending their own lives. They wish there was an alternative to suicide, but they just can't see one.



COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SUICIDE

Myth: People who talk about suicide won't really do it.

Fact: Almost everyone who attempts suicide has shown some clue or warning. Don't ignore even indirect references to death or suicide. Statements such as "You'll be sorry when I'm gone" or "I can't see any way out," — no matter how casually or jokingly said — may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

Myth: If someone is determined to kill themselves, nothing is going to stop them.

Fact: Even a very severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, fluctuating between wanting to live and wanting to die. Rather than wanting death, they just want the pain they are experiencing to stop—and the impulse to end their life does not last forever.

Myth: People who die by suicide are people who were unwilling to seek help.

Fact: Many people try to get help before attempting suicide. Studies indicate that more than 50 percent of suicide victims had sought medical help in the six months prior to their deaths.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Most suicidal individuals give warning signs or signals of their intentions. The best way to prevent suicide is to recognize these warning signs and know how to respond if you do spot them. If you believe that a friend or family member is suicidal, you can play a role in suicide prevention by pointing out the alternatives, showing that you care, and getting a doctor or psychologist involved.



Talking about suicide – Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm, such as “I wish I hadn’t been born,” “If I see you again...” and “I’d be better off dead.”

Seeking out lethal means – Seeking access to guns, pills, knives, or other objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.

Preoccupation with death – Unusual focus on death, dying, or violence. Writing poems or stories about death.

No hope for the future – Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped (“There’s no way out”). Belief that things will never get better or change.

Self-loathing, self-hatred – Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Feeling like a burden (“Everyone would be better off without me”).

Getting affairs in order – Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.

Saying goodbye – Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won’t be seen again.

Withdrawing from others – Withdrawing from friends and family. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.

Self-destructive behaviour – Increased alcohol or drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sex. Taking unnecessary risks as if they have a “death wish.”

Sudden sense of calm – A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to attempt suicide.



HOW YOU CAN HELP OTHERS

Prevention is something that we can all individually help with. A conversation with another person can sometimes be enough to make the difference between life and death for them.

The advice 'WAIT' is one good way to remember how you can support another person who may be suicidal. It stands for:

Watch out for signs of distress and uncharacteristic behaviour

- e.g. social withdrawal, excessive quietness, irritability, uncharacteristic outburst, talking about death or suicide.

Ask “are you having suicidal thoughts?”

- Asking about suicide does not encourage it, nor does it lead a person to start thinking about it; in fact it may help prevent it, and can start a potentially life-saving conversation.

It will pass – assure your loved one that, with help, their suicidal feelings will pass with time

Talk to others – encourage your loved one to seek help from a GP or health professional

SEEK HELP FOR YOURSELF

If you yourself are feeling like ending your life, please call 999 or go to A&E and ask for the contact of the nearest crisis resolution team. These are teams of mental health care professionals who work with people in severe distress.

Other sources of help include:

- **Samaritans** offer a 24-hours a day, 7 days a week support service. Call them free on 116 123. You can also email jo@samaritans.org
- **Papyrus** is a dedicated service for people up to the age of 35 who are worried about how they are feeling or anyone concerned about a young person. You can call the HOPElineUK number on 0800 068 4141, text 07786 209697 or email pat@papyrus-uk.org
- **NHS Choices**: 24-hour national helpline providing health advice and information. Call them free on 111.
- **CALM**: National helpline for men to talk about any troubles they are feeling. Call 0800 58 58 58.
- **Support After Suicide Partnership** offers practical and emotional support on their website for people bereaved and affected by suicide.

SUICIDE: MAIN POINTS

- In 2020, there were 5,224 suicides registered in England and Wales, equivalent to an age-standardised mortality rate of 10.0 deaths per 100,000 people and statistically significantly lower than the 2019 rate of 11.0 deaths per 100,000.
- Around three-quarters of registered suicide deaths in 2020 were for men (3,925 deaths; 75.1%), which follows a consistent trend back to the mid-1990s.
- Males and females aged 45 to 49 years had the highest age-specific suicide rate (24.1 male and 7.1 female deaths per 100,000).

(www.ons.gov.uk)

HOW TO SPEAK UP IF YOU'RE WORRIED

If you spot the warning signs of suicide in someone you care about, you may wonder if it's a good idea to say anything. In this situation, it is natural to feel uncomfortable or afraid. But anyone who talks about suicide or shows other warning signs needs immediate help—the sooner the better.

Ways to start a conversation about suicide:

- “I have been feeling concerned about you lately.”
- “Recently, I've noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing.”
- “I wanted to check in with you because you haven't seemed yourself lately.”

Questions you can ask:

- “When did you begin feeling like this?”
- “Did something happen to make you start feeling this way?”
- “How can I best support you right now?”
- “Have you thought about getting help?”

What you can say that helps:

- “You are not alone in this. I'm here for you.”
- “You may not believe it now, but the way you're feeling will change.”
- “I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help.”
- “When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold off for just one more day, hour, minute—whatever you can manage.”



SUICIDE IN TEENS

Teenage suicide is a serious and growing problem. The teenage years can be emotionally turbulent and stressful. Teenagers face pressures to succeed and fit in. They may struggle with self-esteem issues, self-doubt, and feelings of alienation. For some, this leads to suicide.

Warning signs that a teen may be considering suicide:

- Change in eating and sleeping habits.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities.
- Violent or rebellious behaviour, bullying, running away.
- Drug and alcohol use.
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance.
- Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork.
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, such as stomach pains, headaches, or tiredness.

SUICIDE IN THE ELDERLY

The highest suicide rates of any age group occur among persons aged 65 years and older. One contributing factor is depression in the elderly that is undiagnosed and untreated.

Warning signs that an elderly person may be contemplating suicide:

- Reading about death and suicide.
- Changes in sleep patterns.
- Increased consumption of alcohol or prescription drugs.
- Self-neglect or failing to follow medical orders.
- Stockpiling medications or taking a sudden interest in firearms.
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and social activities, bidding elaborate farewells, or hurrying to revise a will.

LSP'S SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT TEAM

If you have any concerns at all, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our Safeguarding and Prevent team:

Safeguarding and Prevent Officer: Andy Hamer
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