

## ATTITUDES

It is very important that we, as concerned adults, understand our own attitudes toward suicide. In order to be better helpers to those thinking about suicide, we need to acknowledge our own beliefs, and then set them aside. The individual considering suicide is the important person and we need to be able to listen to their feelings without judging them.

### Do:

- Be aware
- Get involved
- Ask directly if they are thinking about suicide
- Talk openly
- Be willing to listen
- Try to understand
- Take action, get help

### Don't:

- Judge
- Give advice
- Don't ask "Why"
- Act shocked
- Become defensive
- Keep it a secret



## SUICIDE IS VIOLENCE AGAINST ONESELF

Suicide has been defined as the "intentional killing of oneself". While this seems straight forward, data on suicide typically underestimates the actual picture because the intention of this act is sometimes difficult to determine. Data on attempted suicides is difficult to capture statistically because many attempts do not lead to hospitalization or professional treatment.

## KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

Most of us tend to worry about things over which we have no control. When faced with worries and fears, try to look beyond the event and give yourself a little pep talk for reassurance. Try not to let feelings of defeat, fear or disappointment overtake you. The more positively you can approach a situation, the more likely it is that you will be able to face and influence the outcome.

Sometimes the help of a counsellor, psychologist, clergyman or friend may be just what you need to help you handle stress. This is not a sign of weakness but strength. It takes strength to realize and accept that you need help.

### You can be in control



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# SUICIDE IS NOT A JOKE

Tips for helping someone who is  
contemplating suicide



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## SUICIDE IN ALBERTA

- Suicide is a leading cause of injury death in Alberta. In 1996 there were 458 suicide deaths in Alberta (17 for every thousand people). Males are more likely to commit suicide than females. Suicide rates among those 20 to 60 years old tend to be much higher than other age groups.
- People who talk about suicide do it about 80% of the time. People who kill themselves have given out definite signals or talked to someone about it.
- Most suicidal people don't really want to die; they just want to stop the pain.
- It is more likely that giving someone the opportunity to talk openly about their feelings will in itself reduce the risk of suicide.
- People of all kinds, cultures, ages and incomes commit suicide.

## SUICIDE IS NOT ABOUT DEATH

- Sometimes people are so distraught by their problems they don't think they can take it anymore. All they can think about is ending the pain. They don't believe they have any choices except to end their pain by killing themselves. They don't really want to die; they just want to end the pain.
- If someone you know is talking about suicide, it's no joke! They may really need you to take them seriously.



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## WARNING SIGNS:

- has tried to commit suicide before
- talks or jokes about it
- makes a will, gives away favorite things
- says goodbye
- takes really stupid risks
- acts like they don't care about themselves
- shows a really strong interest in death
- writes poems or makes drawings about people killing themselves
- has started or increased how much they drink or do drugs
- shows major changes in the way they act

## THERE'S A LOT YOU CAN DO

**Listen:** Listen for the thoughts and feelings behind the words.

**Keep trying:** Often, if you ask "What's wrong?" people will shrug you off. Don't give up. People who are suicidal feel very, very alone. You'll have to keep trying until you convince them that you genuinely care.

**Ask questions:** The best way to find out if they're thinking of committing suicide is to ask:

- "Are things so bad that you're thinking of killing yourself?" If the answer is yes, ask
- "How are you going to do it?"
- "When are you going to do it?"
- "Do you have what you need (gun, pills, knife etc.)?"

The more dangerous the method they have in mind and the more definite their plan, the greater the risk that they'll actually attempt suicide.



**Get help:** Don't ever agree to keep someone's suicide intentions a secret. A mad friend is better than a dead friend. Try to get them to agree on who to tell, but do not wait to tell someone who can help. If you think this person will try to kill themselves soon, do not leave them alone until help arrives.

Early recognition and management of those at risk is essential to reduce suicidal attempts that may result in death or permanent physical and psychological dysfunction.

Current evidence shows that most people feel inadequately prepared to deal with suicidal behaviours.

Help and information are available through many suicide intervention programs as well as through Victim Services

## DID YOU KNOW

- About 80% of successful suicides are committed by men
- 1/3 of suicides are committed using firearms
- For every completed suicide, there are 100 attempts
- Men complete suicide 3-4 times more often than women
- Women attempt suicide 3-4 times more often than men
- Suicide is most commonly understood as a desperate act to avoid the pain of living as much as it is an effort to seek death
- Suicidal people suffer more unemployment, job instability and occupational problems than the general population

