



REMEMBER

- **EVERY SUICIDE THREAT MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY!**
- Your job isn't to question the validity of the threat but to realize that every threat expresses a deep need. Speaking to you about this is a sign that they want to find another way out, and sometimes simply knowing that they are heard and cared about can be the beginning of a better path.
- Suicide and self-harm are two separate issues. Self-harm is an indication of the depth of inner pain that the youth is feeling - and can actually be an attempt to prevent suiciding.
- We need to be available to a youth who is hurting, but it's important to know your limits. If you are not a counsellor or mental health professional supporting and caring for the youth means connecting them to those services.
- You can't be responsible for changing another person's feelings and actions. Know what is within your power and what is not.



RECOGNIZE

Suicide becomes an option when a person can not think of any other way to find emotional relief, and relief is what they are desperate for.

What to look for:

- Saying things like "I'd be better off dead" or "There is no way out".
- Intense and urgent emotional despair or intense guilt or shame; feeling trapped in their life or decisions.
- Romanticizing about death: "If I died then people would love me more" or "I wonder who would say nice things about me at my funeral?"
- Writing stories, poems, doodling about death or suicide; joking and talking about suicide.
- Giving their things away.
- Saying goodbye to loved ones.

Youth who have previously attempted suicide, know someone who has or are battling a mental health challenge are a greater risk.



RESPOND

Controlling your reactions is key in responding to a student who is contemplating or talking about suicide. **Keep calm**...even if it might feel alarming to you.

Clearly ask. Clearly ask the person if they are thinking about suicide. Find out if they have an immediate plan. Being forthright in this case is a must. Ask them to rate the following between 1-10: "How much do you want to die?" And then "How much do you intend to die?" This will help to clarify what the main issue is right now.

Find out. Does the person have a plan of how to kill themselves and a way to execute their plan? If they have a lethal plan and the means to carry it out, you must get them help immediately by taking them to the hospital, or if they will not go willingly, call 911.

Explore reasons. If the young person has not moved into the planning stage and would rate themselves as fairly low in their intention to die, ask them about their reasons for wanting to die and take time to listen non-judgementally. Then invite them to explore reasons to live.

Make a contract. Ask them to agree to not harming themselves for a set period of time, allowing the two of you time to get together again and find other ways of dealing with the despair they feel.

Plan ahead. Help the youth create a "living plan" on their phone or in their journal, for when they are feeling desperate next. This can help them remember the options they have available such as coping skills they could practice, people they could contact, truth they need to remember and a crisis line they could call (eg. youth can access a 24 hour crisis support anywhere in Canada by texting the word "connect" to 686868)

Pull in support. Notify the people who can provide ongoing front line support and are responsible for the youth's safety. Offer to take them to speak with their parents, but recognize that in some cases the home may not be a place of safety for the child. If this conversation with parents is unsafe not just uncomfortable, seek guidance from a mental health professional.



SUICIDE

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resources



RESOURCES

The Very Well Mind podcast - The "Break the Silence on Suicide" episode offers compassionate guidance on what to do if someone you know is thinking about suicide.

www.livingworks.net - Online training to equip you.

www.suicideprevention.ca - Suicide prevention information and a list of crisis centres to call in each province.