



## REMEMBER

- **EVERY SUICIDE THREAT MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY!** Risk asking an awkward question. Your job isn't to question the validity of the threat but to realize that it 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 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. You are not a counsellor or mental health professional but you can support and care for them as you help them to connect to those services. Listen and appreciate what they are going through, but remember you can't be responsible for changing their feelings and actions.



## 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.

**Step One:** 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: "How much do you want to die?" (rate from 1-10). Then ask them, "How much do you intend to die?" (rate from 1-10). This will help to clarify what the main issue is right now.

**Step Two:** Find out if the person has 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.

**Step Three:** 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. Invite them to explore reasons for wanting to live as well and 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.

**Step Four:** 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)

**Step Five:** Notify the people who can provide ongoing front line support and are responsible for the child's safety. Offer to take the youth 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

lifeteams  
resources



## RESOURCES

**www.kidshelpphone.ca** - Great for resources and information or call Kids Helpline 1-800-668-6868 to talk to a professional that will help to guide you as to what to do next.

**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.