

If you are feeling suicidal, or you are concerned about someone you know - this fact sheet has information on what you can do, and where you can go for help.

What is suicidal behaviour?

Suicidal behaviour refers to thoughts, threats and actions about wanting to take your own life.

This includes:

- Thoughts of wanting to die
- Talking about wanting to take your own life
- Making plans to take your own life
- Carrying out actions to take your own life (self-harm or attempting suicide).

It's important to take all signs and threats of suicide seriously. Suicide is preventable. Most people who are suicidal don't really want to die; the problems they are facing are overwhelming and they can't see any other way out.

Warning signs

Most people who are suicidal give definite warning signs of their suicidal intentions, but often they're really well hidden. Sometimes people are unaware of the significance of these warning signs or do not know how to respond to them.

The most **serious warning signs** are when people are thinking, threatening or planning to kill themselves. The person may say they've thought about killing themselves or make comments like "No one would care if I was dead" or "I'll just kill myself then". This may also be reflected in other ways, such as artwork they do, stories they write and the way they're looking after themselves.

You need to get **immediate help** if you see, or hear anyone doing one or more of the following:

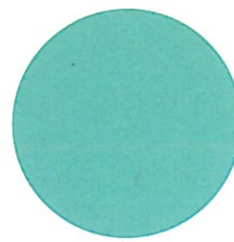
- **Threatening to hurt or kill himself or herself**, or talking about wanting to hurt or kill himself or herself
- **Looking for ways to kill himself or herself** by seeking access to guns, pills, or other means of suicide
- **Talking, writing or drawing about death, dying or suicide**, when these actions are out of the ordinary.

If you are having suicidal thoughts

It is not uncommon to feel this way. Lots of people have suicidal thoughts and have worked through them - crises pass and problems are solved.

Suicidal thinking is usually associated with problems that can be treated. Depression, anxiety disorders and alcohol and drug problems can interfere with how you see yourself and the world around you. Sometimes it is difficult to see a way through your problems by yourself.

It is much worse if you feel alone, but it doesn't need to be that way. There are people who are willing, able and available to help you.



Other warning signs are also important. Seek help as soon as possible if you see or hear anyone doing one or more of the following:

Hopelessness

giving up hope that things can get better

Purposelessness

seeing no reason for living or feeling like they have no purpose in life

Anxiety

worrying about things, feeling restless, either being unable to sleep or sleeping all the time

Trapped

feeling like there's no way out

Withdrawing

from friends, family, community

Anger

feeling uncontrolled rage, or wanting to seek revenge

Recklessness

acting impulsively or doing risky things without thinking about the consequences

Mood changes

that are sudden - for example seeming very irritable or sad one day and very happy the next.

Asking for help

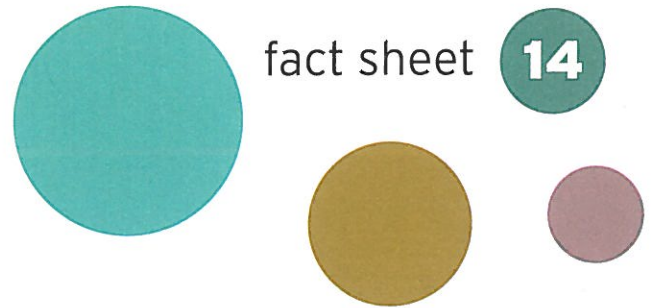
Thoughts and feelings of ending your life can be overwhelming and frightening. It can be very difficult to know what to do and how to cope, but help is available. Although it can be hard, it's very important to tell someone you trust that you are having suicidal thoughts and to ask them for help.

If your request for help isn't heard, ask again, or try to find someone else who will listen.

What to do if someone you know is suicidal

It is difficult to always know what to say or do, but here are some ways you can help.

- Take their thoughts and feelings about suicide seriously
- Acknowledge what the person is experiencing; acknowledge their fear, sadness or despair. Make them feel valued and worthwhile
- Acknowledge the problem that the person's facing. Recognise their concern rather than passing over the problem or trying to make it seem small and insignificant. Provide them with reassurance - but don't dismiss the problem
- Be calm and understanding—try not to appear shocked or alarmed by anything the person tells you
- Show that you're concerned by listening carefully and asking questions to find out more about what the person's thinking and feeling
- You can suggest alternative solutions and try to help them see the problem in a new light. But be very careful to avoid sounding like you're lecturing or preaching to them
- Ask them directly if they're thinking about suicide. This can be really hard to do but it shows them that you care. If they say yes, don't make promises about keeping it secret
- Suggest that they should get professional help as soon as possible. Help them make an appointment with a doctor, counsellor or psychologist and perhaps go along with them to help them feel more comfortable



- If they're in immediate danger of harming themselves, someone should stay with them till they're out of danger. This doesn't have to be you, but it should be someone you trust to get the help which is needed
- If the person refuses help or isn't able to get it for themselves, it's important that you talk to a health professional for advice on the situation. You should let the parents of the person know what's going on, unless it's an emergency and you have to act straight away.
- If you're caring for a person who's suicidal over long periods of time, make sure you look after yourself as well. Make sure you take time out to do things you enjoy and talk the problem through with an adult you trust. We've included some numbers below for phone lines you can call if you want to talk or if you need advice.

Where to get help:

If you or someone you know is in need of urgent help, ring the police or ambulance service on 111 and clearly tell the operator that someone's life is in danger.

If the situation is serious but not an emergency, you could consult your doctor, or a mental health professional (such as a psychologist or psychiatrist).

Whether it's you or someone else that needs help, you have a number of options of people to talk to. The following services have trained counsellors to talk to who will understand how you're feeling.

The Lowdown team: If you want to chat about how you're feeling, or you've got any questions, you can;

Text The Lowdown team for free on 5626.

Email The Lowdown team in the Chat section of www.thelowdown.co.nz. You can also ask them to give you a call back if you want to talk on the phone.

Youthline: provides a free, confidential and non-judgemental telephone counselling service. They will listen to you and help you talk through your problems. You can call toll-free on 0800 37 66 33

Depression Helpline: call 0800 111 757

Lifeline: is a nationwide 24-hour counseling service on toll-free 0800 543 354

Kidslines: is a helpline where you can talk to a Kidslines Buddy - a bit like an older brother or sister who is trained to help callers. Call any weekday between 4-6pm on 0800 KIDSLINE (0800 543 754)

What's Up: is a free phone counselling service for 5 to 18 year-olds. It operates 7 days a week from noon to midnight on 0800 WHATSUP (0800 942 8787)