



What young people should know about suicide



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health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Department of Health : Republic of South Africa



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Every life is precious, and everyone must work together to protect it. The information in this brochure will help you to understand some of the warning signs and facts about suicide. It may help you save a life.

Someone may think about suicide when they are going through difficult times like when:

- There are changes in their close relationships like parents divorcing or breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend;
- They suffered disappointments like losing their job or failing at school;
- They suffered a loss like the death of a loved one;
- They have a serious illness or thinking that they are seriously ill; or
- There has been a previous suicide in the family.

Friends who are going through these and other difficult times need support from you and their family. Watch to see if they show signs of suicide and help them if they do.

Warning signs of suicide:

People who are thinking about suicide may show signs of hurting inside. These signs can include:

- Withdrawing from friends and family;
- Losing interest in activities they enjoyed before;
- Having mood swings and personality changes;
- Neglecting the way they look;
- Being in a depressed mood;
- Being aggressive or irritable;
- Showing a decline in their school work;
- Changing their sleeping habits like sleeping a lot, difficulty in falling asleep or sleeping for few hours;
- Suddenly changing eating habits;
- Using drugs or alcohol;
- Taking unnecessary and dangerous risks;
- Suddenly being happy after a long depression;
- Giving away their things;
- Being interested in death like asking legal questions about death;
- Talking about death and suicide; and
- Talking about life after death.

People who are thinking about suicide may say things like:

- “I am going to kill myself”
- “I want to die”
- “I can’t stand living anymore”
- “Don’t worry about me; I won’t be around much longer”
- “I don’t want to be a burden anymore”
- “I’ve had it; I don’t want to bother anyone with my troubles anymore”
- “My family would be better off without me”
- “I’ve had enough; I am ending it all”

Many of your friends may show some of the signs above. One sign may or may not mean trouble. However, more than one sign, lasting for more than one week often means that they need help.

Facts about suicide

- Most people show warning signs before they commit suicide.
- Most people who have tried suicide before may try it again.
- Most people who are thinking about suicide do not want to die; they just want the pain to stop. Once they know they can be helped, that there are treatments available for their illness, that

it isn’t their fault and that they are not alone, it may give them hope.

- You should never “give up” on someone, just because you think they have made up their mind.

What should I do to help someone who is thinking about suicide?

- Listen carefully and give them a chance to talk about their feelings.
- Let them know that you are worried and that you want to help.
- Never promise to keep suicide talks secret.
- Immediately look for help.
- Tell an adult right away, such as a parent, teacher, coach, church pastor, counsellor, doctor or call a suicide line.
- Remove anything that they could use to commit suicide.
- Do not leave the suicidal person alone.
- Take all talk of suicide seriously.

For help and more information contact:

- The nearest clinic
- The nearest hospital
- The nearest health care provider
- Your religious leader
- A social worker