



Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

SUICIDE



Plainer language series

Suicide means ending your own life. It is sometimes a way for people to escape pain or suffering. When someone ends their own life, we say that they “died by suicide.” A “suicide attempt” means that someone tried to end their life but did not die.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE?

Many people think about suicide. Thinking about suicide does not mean that you will do it. Thinking about suicide can bring up difficult feelings but these feelings do not last forever. You can find people to help you feel better.



If you are thinking about ending your life, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. If you think that a loved one is in danger, call 9-1-1.

You can start by talking to someone else. You can talk to a family member or friend you trust. You can also call a crisis line. In BC, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. You can call this number any time of day or night when you need help. It is a free call. They are trained to help people who are thinking about suicide. Translators can help you in many different languages. Say the name of the language you need in English to get an interpreter.

If you have a doctor or a counsellor, tell them how you feel. They can teach you how to deal with thoughts of suicide.



HOW CAN I LESSEN THE RISK OF SUICIDE?

No one can say that they will never have thoughts of suicide. You can do two big things to help prevent suicide. The first is to build connections with other people. The second is to find help for your mental health when you need it.

1. Build connections with other people

Feeling connected to others is a big part of staying safe from suicide.

Here are ways to build connections:

- Spend time with family and friends
- Go to cultural or religious events
- Get involved in your community. For example, sign up for classes at your community centre or college
- Help others. For example, help a charity or other group

2. Get help right away

Mental health problems can be a big part of suicide. It is best to find help as early as you can, but it is never too late.

Some signs that you or others you might know are struggling with their mental health include:

- Feeling like nothing makes you happy anymore
- Feeling very sad or hopeless for at least two weeks at a time
- Feeling like you cannot cope with things that happen in your life
- Feeling very stressed or scared for more than two weeks
- Noticing unwanted or unpleasant thoughts or noticing strange sensations, like hearing voices that other people do not hear
- Sleeping less or more than usual
- Eating less or more than usual
- Drinking more alcohol or using more drugs than usual
- Taking a lot of time off work or school
- Avoiding family and friends
- Feeling “run down” or sick often

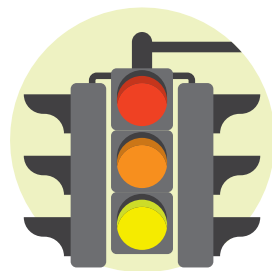
Talk to a doctor if you notice these signs. The doctor can see what may be causing the problems.

WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF SUICIDE?

Some people talk openly about thoughts of suicide, but many people keep their feelings secret.

There are signs to show that someone needs help. The person may

- Talk about wanting to die
- Use more drugs or alcohol than usual
- Say they have no reason to live
- Seem very scared or worried



- Say that they feel like there is no way out of a situation
- Not see hope for the future
- Not want to spend time with others
- Have a hard time controlling their anger
- Do things that may be dangerous and does not think about what might happen
- Go through big mood changes
- Start to give away treasured things like pets

HOW CAN I HELP SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE?

If you are worried about someone thinking about ending their life, it is important to ask them: “Are you thinking about ending your life?” Talking about suicide will not make someone die by suicide. You need to ask them to figure out how you can help.



If someone says they have a plan to end their life, it is an emergency. Do not leave the other person alone. Call the suicide crisis line at 1-800-784-2433. They can send emergency workers if you need them. Stay with the person until the suicide crisis line workers or emergency workers say you can leave.

If they do not have a plan to end their life, they still need help. You can listen and help them find extra help.

Listen

Many people feel like they are all alone with their feelings. Listening and paying attention shows them that they are not alone and that you care. You do not have to say much at all. You just have to be there for them. Here are some important things to remember:

- Take the other person seriously.
- Try to understand the speaker's feelings and perspective from their point of view. This shows that you want to learn what the other person is going through.
- Avoid interrupting.
- Show the other person that you are a safe person to talk to. Do not judge them or make fun of them.
- Trust is very important. Do not make promises that you cannot keep.
- Say things like, "You are really important to me" or "I care about you." You can also say, "I understand you think things will never get better, but I can help you find other solutions."
- Avoid giving a lot of advice. You can share your own experiences if you went through a similar situation. But remember that your role is to listen and help the other person decide what they need to feel better.

Connect them with support

Ask if they can talk to someone about their feelings. It could be a family member or a friend. It could also be a doctor or a counsellor. You can also give them the phone number for the crisis line. The people who run crisis lines are trained to help others. They can help with many different problems. In BC, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. You can call at any time. It is a free call. For help in another language, say the name of the language in English three times and wait for an interpreter to join the call.

Remember, no one expects you to be an expert.

If you are worried about yourself or another person, call the crisis line at 1-800-784-2433. If you think that someone's life is in danger, call 9-1-1.



WHAT IF SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT DIES BY SUICIDE?

Losing someone you care about by suicide can be very hard. You may wonder if you could have done more to help them. You may not understand why it happened. You may feel guilty, ashamed and angry.

It is important to know that suicide is not your fault. Many things go into someone's decision to end their life.

Here are a few ways to cope with loss:

- It is okay to feel a mix of emotions. Remind yourself that your feelings are real.
- Talk with your family and friends. Let everyone share their feelings.
- Some people may not know how to help you. It is okay to tell them what you need.
- Find a support group in your community. Talk to other people who lost a loved one by suicide.
- Remember that healing takes time. You can take as much time as you need.
- Honour your loved one's life in a way that is meaningful to you.

Support groups can be a good way to connect with other people who are also dealing with loss. The BC Bereavement Helpline has several support groups. They also have an English-language phone line at 1-877-779-2223 so you can talk to someone about what you are going through. Find more information at www.bcbh.ca.

If you are having a hard time coping, it is a good idea to talk to a counsellor or other mental health expert. A doctor can help you find a counsellor.



Where can I learn more about preventing suicide?

If you need help right away, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. Translators can help you in many different languages. Say the name of the language you need in English to get an interpreter.

If you think someone's life is in danger, call 9-1-1.

You can talk to a doctor or a counsellor about suicide. You can also look at these resources:

BC Partners for Mental Health and Substance Use Information

Visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca for information sheets and other useful information. You can learn more about mental health and substance use problems. You can also read stories and connect with others.

Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention

Visit www.suicideprevention.ca for many different resources on suicide, including what to do when you have thoughts of suicide or how you can help other people.

This booklet was written by the Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division. It is based on current research and resources. We also check key facts with doctors and other mental health experts. Please contact us if you want to know what resources we used.

Founded in 1918, CMHA is a national charity that helps maintain and improve mental health for all Canadians.

bc.cmha.ca



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Health Association
British Columbia
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Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Colombie-Britannique
La santé mentale pour tous



heretohelp
Mental health and substance use
information you can trust