

Student Assist

HELPING SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL

If you are concerned about someone who you think may be suicidal there are things you can do, even if the person is refusing to see a counsellor or health professional. The key to helping anyone in an emotional crisis is to encourage them to talk about what is going on. Simply being with them as a caring person who is willing to listen to their feelings can give them some valuable time and space to consider alternatives.

What to look for...

While it is impossible to predict whether or not someone will harm themselves, there are a number of warning signs:

- depression, withdrawal from friends and family
- isolation from all types of support
- behaviour changes (weight loss and lack of sleep)
- life changes (loss of friend, parent, relationship break-up)
- negative disguised comments (I'll get even, I'm a burden)
- carelessness, more than usual risk-taking behaviours
- direct comments (eg "I just want it all to end", "I want to die")
- writing/drawing about death and dying
- suicidal types of behaviour, hurting or cutting self
- giving away prized possessions
- sudden happiness following depression – it is possible that they feel relief after making a definite plan to suicide.

What can I do that could be helpful?

LISTEN: Just listen, carefully, sensitively, without judgment. Give them your undivided attention.

ASK THE QUESTION: Don't be afraid to ask your friend if they are thinking about suicide. If they have already thought about suicide it can be a relief to talk about it with someone who seems open.

ACCEPT: Accept the person 'as is', without agreeing or disagreeing with his/her behaviour or point of view.

EMPATHISE: Sincerely communicate your understanding of the issue as they describe it, in both content and feeling.

OFFER HOPE: Help the person to understand that the situation can improve, and that things will not always seem so bad. Do not try to criticise, moralise, correct or make decisions for the person. What you would do may not be the best thing for them to do.

ENCOURAGE: Encourage the person to continue to talk about their issues, and remind them that it is normal to talk with someone he/she can trust when in need of help.

OFFER OPTIONS: See "Who to Contact" over the page.

BE AVAILABLE and FOLLOW-UP: Remain open to further discussions, let them know that you are available if they need you. Check back with the person because you are their friend and you care about how they are feeling.

RECOGNISE YOUR OWN LIMITS: As you help your friend, your role is to provide support and to suggest other options when support is not enough. Remember your own limits; do not become more involved than your time and skills permit. If the issues are beyond your ability to help, you may want to call and talk with a Counsellor at UNE Student Assist about how to better help your friend.

Remember:

Seeking counselling is a personal choice and no one can make the person's choice for them. If the person is reluctant or refuses to attend UNE Student Assist (and it is not an emergency)

- don't force the issue, simply restate your concerns and encourage them to consider the options available
- suggest that confronting a problem is a positive sign of health and maturity
- acknowledge, validate and discuss the person's concerns about visiting a counsellor

An emergency is defined as a situation in which a person's life is in immediate danger. Emergencies are more than what you, alone, can be expected to help with. If you discover someone in the process of attempting suicide **PHONE 000**.

Long term distress is more than you should be expected to help with. Don't expect to stay up all night, night after night with a distressed friend. It's not your job and it hurts you and your life. Remember UNE Student Assist is here to help both of you.

WHO TO CONTACT FOR FURTHER HELP:

Armidale and N. E. Hospital Emergency Department	(02) 6776 9622
Tablelands Mental Health	1300 669 757
UNE Student Assist	(02) 6773 2897
Armidale Community Health	(02) 6776 9600
UNE Safety and Security (24 hours)	(02) 6773 2099
University of New England Medical Centre	(02) 6773 2916
Anglican Counselling Service (Armidale)	(02) 6765 2527
Your General Practitioner	

Telephone Counselling and Information Services

Lifeline (24hours/cost of a local call)	131114
Samaritans Suicide Crisis Help Line (toll free)	1800 198 313
Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service	(02) 9207 2800
(4pm – midnight)	1800 805 379
New England Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline (Referral made to appropriate help. Mon- Fri 8-4.40pm for the cost of a local call)	1300 660 059

www.beyondblue.org.au

<http://depressioNet.com.au>

Do's	Don'ts
Take the situation seriously	Ignore the situation
Listen, be calm and empathetic	Act shocked or embarrassed
Show you care by giving time	Leave them alone
Assess the degree of distress	Say everything will be alright
Ask about suicide plans	Challenge the individual to go ahead
Remove the means if possible	Give advice
Consult and refer	Panic
Stay with the individual if the risk is high	Ridicule or use guilt
Focus the individual on handling one day at a time	Agree with their hopeless situation
Identify support	Minimise the situation
Inform the individual of resources in the community	Be sworn to secrecy

