

## WHAT TO DO NEXT

Here are some suggestions and sources of support. If at first you don't find the help you need, persist. Try all avenues and don't give up.

### If someone tells you they're feeling suicidal...

- Make sure they're not left alone
- Remove anything they could use to take their own life, eg tablets, firearms, rope
- Get medical help immediately

### Get medical help

- Phone your GP surgery (outside normal surgery hours, you'll be directed to an out-of-hours service)
- Call 999 or take them to A&E and **stay with them until they are seen by a member of the mental health team**

### Even if it's only a hunch, share your concerns with others

- Don't be afraid to involve their family, friends or colleagues
- Share this leaflet with others and plan together how you are going to keep the person safe

### Take care of yourself

- Talk to your own GP about your feelings
- Confide in a trusted friend
- Find a support group for carers of people with mental health problems
- If the person does take their own life, don't feel guilty. It is not always possible to prevent suicide.

## HELP AND SUPPORT

### Contact confidential helplines and sources of support

#### Samaritans

08457 90 90 90 (24 hours)  
www.samaritans.org

#### PAPYRUS

Prevention of Young Suicide  
0800 068 41 41  
(Mon-Fri, 10.00-17.00 and 19.00-22.00; weekends 14.00-17.00)  
www.papyrus-uk.org

#### CALM

Campaign Against Living Miserably  
0800 58 58 58  
(7 days a week, 17.00-00.00)  
www.thecalmzone.net

#### SANE

0845 767 8000  
(7 days a week, 18.00-23.00)  
www.sane.org.uk

#### MIND

0300 123 3393  
(Mon-Fri, 09.00-18.00)  
www.mind.org.uk

#### Maytree

A sanctuary for the suicidal  
020 7263 7070  
www.maytree.org.uk



This leaflet was developed at the University of Exeter Medical School in collaboration with The Alliance of Suicide Prevention Charities (TASC)

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## CONTACT

### Our contact details (Canterbury)

#### Wellbeing Team

Keynes College, Canterbury CT2 7NP  
A drop-in service runs from Monday to Friday, from 14.00-15.30.  
Please go to Student Support and Wellbeing Reception.  
T: +44 (0)1227 823206  
E: wellbeing@kent.ac.uk  
www.kent.ac.uk/studentwellbeing

### Useful contacts (Canterbury)

#### University Medical Centre

Giles Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7PB  
T: +44 (0)1227 469333  
www.kent.ac.uk/medical

### University Nursing Services

Room EG3, Keynes College, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NP  
The University Nursing Service is available at the University of Kent (Canterbury campus) and is staffed 24 hours a day during term time by registered nurses.  
T: +44 (0)1227 823503

### Our contact details (Medway)

#### Student Wellbeing

The Wellbeing Team is located within the Student Services Department on the Ground Floor of Gillingham Building.  
E: medwaywellbeing@kent.ac.uk  
T: +44 (0)1634 202984

### Useful contacts (Medway)

#### Sunlight Centre Surgery

105 Richmond Road, Gillingham, ME7 1LX  
T: +44 (0)1634 283847

IT'S SAFE TO  
TALK ABOUT  
SUICIDE

Does someone close to you seem really down?  
Might they be thinking about suicide?  
The only way to know is to ask

*Student Support and Wellbeing*



# SUICIDE IS RARE, BUT...

- it happens
- there are over 6,000 deaths by suicide in the UK every year – an average of 16 per day.

### Don't think:

"It couldn't happen to us."

It can happen in any family.

Intense emotional strain and mental exhaustion can cause people to behave in uncharacteristic and unpredictable ways.

### Don't think:

"He's not the suicidal type."

There isn't one.

### Some things that drive people to think about suicide are:

- Personal catastrophes, such as being made redundant, the collapse of their own business, the break-up of a relationship or being refused access to children
- A persistent sense of worthlessness or failure; uncertainty about sexual identity or personal goals
- Good things happening to other people, such as friends getting married, going off to university or getting new jobs, and feeling left behind
- A combination of the above. A whole series of little setbacks can sometimes be more devastating than one big thing.

# WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

There may not be any. An emotional crisis is not like a heart attack or a stroke, where there are visible warning signs.

People who have reached rock bottom can be very skilled at hiding their thoughts and feelings.

### They MAY be:

- Quiet
- Brooding
- Withdrawn or distant
- Not making eye contact
- Agitated
- Irritable or rude
- Drinking a lot
- Talking about suicide or saying it's all hopeless

### They may ALSO be:

- Busy
- Chirpy
- Living life as normal
- Going to work
- Laughing and joking
- Talking about future plans
- Telling you not to worry about them

So how will you know if they're thinking about suicide?

**The safest way is to ask them.**

# WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO ASK

If someone is suicidal, they are likely to be feeling:

- cut off from everyone around them
- frightened and ashamed about wanting to die
- desperate for help but afraid to ask.

They need someone to start the conversation for them. This shows them that they have permission to talk about it and that they don't have to wrestle with their dark and terrible thoughts alone.

### Some common fears:

"Won't talking about suicide put the idea in her head?"

No. If a person is suicidal, the idea is already there. If they aren't suicidal, it won't do any harm.

"What if I say the wrong thing? It could damage our relationship."

Showing a person you care about them won't damage your relationship. Saying nothing could result in losing them forever.

It's important to trust your gut instincts. If something about the person doesn't look or feel right, say something.

**Saying something is safer than saying nothing.**

**Saying the word won't make it happen.**

# WHAT TO SAY

It can be really scary starting this kind of conversation.

### Step 1:

Explore how they're feeling

If something bad has happened to them, ask, "How has it made you feel?" They may shrug and say, "I'm OK." If they don't seem OK to you, keep trying, quietly and gently.

Listen attentively. Try to keep the dialogue open by asking questions like, "How bad is it?" or "What's that like?"

Don't deny what they're telling you, and don't pretend you know how they feel.

I'm a totally useless person.

**X** No you're not.

**✓** How long have you been feeling like that?

### Step 2:

Ask the 'S' question

If they give any indication that they're feeling hopeless or can't see the point in going on, ask clearly and calmly, "Are you having any thoughts of suicide?"

Don't be too quick to accept denials or joking responses.

Don't worry, I'm not going to top myself.

**X** Phew, that's a relief.

**✓** We should still think about getting you some help.