



Family Centre Information Package

Suicide and Suicide Awareness



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PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU ARE HAVING THOUGHTS ABOUT HARMING YOURSELF, OR IF YOU INTEND TO HARM YOURSELF IN ANY WAY, PLEASE STOP READING THIS AND IMMEDIATELY CALL THE DISTRESS LINE (403-327-7905) OR GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION AND ASSISTANCE. THIS IS NOT INTENDED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT IN THE CASE OF SUICIDAL THOUGHTS.

WHAT IS SUICIDE?

Suicide is an intentional act, where the goal is to end one's own life. It is an act done out of despair and hopelessness. Stress factors (like financial and relationship problems) and drug/alcohol use can also play a role.

WARNING SIGNS

You may notice the following:

- Feelings or expressions of hopelessness and helplessness
- Depression, often for a lengthy period
- Suddenly feeling better and seeming happier (this can indicate a decision to die by suicide)
- Giving away personal items, especially prized possessions
- Direct or indirect talk about dying by suicide. This could include phrases such as, "The world would be better off without me" and "I have nothing left to live for" as well as more direct talk, like "I don't want to live any longer" and "I just want to die."
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Reduced interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Neglecting self-care and basic hygiene
- Increased agitation or reckless behaviour
- Reconnecting with people (to say goodbye)

Hopelessness is perhaps the biggest indicator of suicide risk. When someone has lost hope, they will have a more difficult time identifying and accessing resources, and may not be able to see any other alternatives to reducing their pain.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone can be at risk of attempting or completing suicide. Suicide affects all gender, age, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups. However, there are some factors that increase the likelihood that someone may take his or her life. These include:

- Major loss, including job or home loss, the end of a relationship, death of a loved one, etc.
- Major physical illness
- Alcohol and other substance use and abuse
- Mental illness, including schizophrenia, mood disorders, and depression
- Trauma or abuse
- Lack of social supports
- Financial issues

MYTHS

- *Talking about suicide will give the person ideas about attempting suicide.*
 - People already have ideas in their heads. Talking about suicide will not make someone attempt suicide. Reaching out to someone may actually give them a reason to go on living.
- *People who talk about attempting suicide are just trying to get attention.*
 - People who are thinking about harming themselves are in pain and feeling alone and hopeless. They often try to reach out because they don't know what to do. Always treat suicide talk seriously.
- *The people who talk about suicide are the ones who won't do anything about it.*
 - Most people who have attempted or completed suicide gave many indications of their intentions in the weeks and months leading up to the attempt, including talking about killing themselves or wanting to die.
- *Once someone has made the decision to die by suicide, there isn't anything anyone can do to stop them or change their mind.*
 - Most people who are contemplating suicide don't want to die, they just want an end to their pain. Suicide can be prevented in most cases
- *People who attempt, or talk about, suicide are either crazy or weak.*
 - This is not so! They are in pain and cannot figure out how else to relieve their pain. They feel they have exhausted all their resources, and have run out of hope. Suicide does not discriminate by age, gender, class, race, school grades, work performance, popularity, or intelligence. Anyone could attempt suicide.
- *Those who have attempted suicide in the past have got it out of their system.*
 - People with a history of suicide attempts are considered at an increased risk of attempting again.

- *The problems Joe or Jane is going through are not serious enough for them to feel suicidal.*
 - Just because you don't consider problems serious enough to feel suicidal about doesn't mean the person facing them feels the same way. There will be people who consider your big problems to be insignificant. Everyone experiences stress differently.

FACTS

- Most people who attempt suicide want to live.
- While men are more likely to complete suicide, women are more likely to attempt suicide.
- Even though it is fairly rare, suicide does occur in pre-pubescent children. Do not assume that a child will not attempt suicide simply because they are not yet a teenager.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 15-34 and is one of the top 10 causes of death for all Canadians.
- Depression and alcoholism account for the majority of deaths by suicide.
- Those with psychiatric disorders are at an increased risk of suicide.
- Suicide can be prevented by increasing education and awareness.
- Approximately 4000 people in Canada die each year from suicide.
- Suicide rates are between 5 and 7 times higher for First Nations and Inuit people than for non-Aboriginal people.
- Very few suicides happen with no indicators or warning signs. Catching these signs can help to prevent a suicide attempt.

FAMILY CENTRE SERVICES

Family Centre offers individual and family counselling services (ages 7+). If you are interested in scheduling a counselling session, please call Family Centre (403) 320-4232 extension 240, to speak to an intake counsellor.

Family Centre offers the Kin Family Resource Library. Visitors to the library have access to books, videos, DVDs, and magazines that cover a variety of topics. The library offers resources that are targeted towards parents as well as resources suitable for children. The Kin Family Resource Library is a free service; all that is required is a Family Centre library card, which is available at the reception desk. To search and reserve available books click [here](#).

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE

It is important to get help as soon as possible if you think someone you know is considering, or has decided on, suicide. Do not try to handle the situation all on your own. Call 911, offer to take the person to the ER, or support them as they call a crisis line. You can also call a crisis line for support yourself. Numbers for various help lines can be found in the [Resources](#) section at the end of this document.



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- Learn the warning signs and risk factors associated with suicide
- Reach out to her. Having meaningful relationships is considered a protective factor
- Take anyone who is talking about dying by suicide very seriously
- If the person is in crisis, do not leave him alone until help is at hand
- Remove or prevent access to obvious means of self-harm (like medications, drugs, firearms, razors, etc)
- Try not to act shocked if someone tells you he wants to die by suicide
- Listen attentively to what she is saying
- Be gentle and caring. Do not try to offer “tough love”
- Be non-judgemental
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help
- Talk openly about suicide. Do not be afraid to ask questions about her intentions
- Offer to help him make an appointment with a doctor or therapist, and offer to accompany him to the appointment, if you are able
- Never promise to keep his intentions about suicide a secret
- Follow up with her regularly to see how she is doing

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

If you have been thinking about attempting suicide, the best thing you can do is to get help. If you are having suicidal thoughts right now, or if you have come up with a plan to harm yourself, [please call the Distress Line \(403-327-7905\)](tel:403-327-7905) or [go to the nearest hospital for immediate assistance](#). If you are not in crisis, the following activities and suggestions, though not a substitute for professional help, may help you to find some relief:

- Talk to someone. Whether a friend, a professional, a co-worker, or a family member. Suicide may seem like the only option because you aren’t able to think of any alternatives. Someone else may be able to suggest resources you haven’t considered.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. Suicidal thoughts often become more intense when under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

- Crises that lead to suicidal thoughts are usually temporary. Give yourself some time to see if the current crisis passes. If you can't think of anything to pass the extra time, try reading this : <http://www.metanoia.org/suicide/>
- Read some funny jokes or watch a funny show. Laughter is the best medicine, as they say, and the humour might give you a few moments of relief.
- Connect with other people. Go for coffee or a walk with a friend. Building healthy relationships is considered a protective factor against suicide.
- Get rid of anything you might use to harm yourself. Get the temptations out of your home. Ask a friend or family member to hold onto things you don't want to throw away.
- Come up with 5 reasons for living. And then come up with 5 more. If you can't think of 5, come up with 1. Then come up with another. Reasons for living do not have to be big, exciting things. They can be as simple as the smell of cookies baking.
- Do something you enjoy. If you can't think of anything, see if this [list of enjoyable activities](#) will give you some ideas.
- Make a safety plan to use during a crisis. This plan should include the numbers of a doctor, counsellor, or family member.
- Make time to participate in activities you enjoy and maybe even find new activities.
- Exercise. Try swimming, walking, yoga, or any other physical activity.
- Build your support network. Find resources, such as the ones listed in this document, which will help you when you are experiencing a crisis.

RESOURCES

LOCAL RESOURCES

- Lethbridge Family Services Counselling 403-327-5724
 - 1107 2A Avenue N., Lethbridge, AB T1H 0E6
 - LFS provides counselling services to individuals, both adults and children, who are experiencing difficulties in their lives, including suicidal ideation. Subsidies may be available.
 - Offers a suicide bereavement group every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month, from 7-930 pm. Contact Serena Visser at LFS to participate.
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Lethbridge) 403-329-4775
 - 426 6 Street S., Lethbridge, AB T1J 2C9
 - The local office of CMHA provides crisis intervention, education and training in mental health issues, and peer support and self-help programs, including a youth group focussed on building community.

Family Centre - email: info@famcentre.ca - phone: (403) 320 4232
Suite 225, 200 - 4 Avenue S., Lethbridge Centre, Lethbridge, AB T1J 4C9

- Community Mental Health (Alberta Health Services) 403-381-5280
 - 200 5 Avenue S., Lethbridge, AB T1J 4L1 (Provincial Building)
 - Customer focussed services include crisis intervention and stabilization, prevention, community support, intervention services.

- Associates Counselling Services 403-381-6000
 - 239 12B Street N., Lethbridge, AB, T1H 2K8
 - Associates is an association of independent professionals and offers a wide range of counselling services, including family and child/youth counselling. Subsidies may be available.

- Crossroads Counselling Centre 403-327-7080
 - 202 – 542 7 St. S, Lethbridge, AB, T1J 2H1
 - Crossroads offers counselling to individuals, couples, and families for a variety of concerns. Subsidies may be available.

WEBSITES

- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention <http://www.suicideprevention.ca/>
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education <http://www.save.org>
- Canadian Mental Health Association: http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/preventing-suicide/
- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention: <http://www.suicideprevention.ca/about-suicide/>
- ConnectTeen: <http://www.calgaryconnecteen.com/>
- Kids Help Phone: <http://kidshelpphone.ca>
- The Support Network: <http://www.thesupportnetwork.com/>

ONLINE CHAT AND DISCUSSION FORUMS

- Kids Help Phone online: <http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/AskUsOnline.aspx>
- Youth in BC: <http://youthinbc.com/>
- Crisis Centre Chat (for adults): <http://crisiscentrechat.ca/>
- Crisis Support Centre:
http://www.crisissupportcentre.com/index.php/get_support_now/online-crisis-chat/
- Distress Centre (requires registration to access, but you can remain anonymous):
<http://www.distresscentre.com/>

VIDEO

- It Gets Better Project: Individuals submit videos that give hope to LGBT youth by letting them know that 'it gets better'. Visit <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/> or YouTube to view these videos.
- *Suicide Prevention Life Line: Stories of Hope and Recovery*: This website features short videos from suicide survivors. Please visit <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/learn/video.aspx> to view these videos.
- *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946): This classic Christmas film details George Bailey's desire to end his life and an angel's attempt to show him what it would be like if he had never been born. Rated PG.

BOOKS

- *When Nothing Matters Anymore: A Survival Guide for Depressed Teens* by Bev Cobain: Readers will learn about adolescent depression, including how common it is, what the symptoms are, and treatment options. This book features stories and poetry from teens who struggled with depression.
- *Suicide: The Forever Decision. For Those Thinking About Suicide, and For Those Who Know, Love, or Counsel Them* by Paul Quinnett: This book provides information on suicide, including the social aspects of suicide and how to get help.
- *Step Back From the Exit: 45 Reasons to Say No to Suicide* by Jillayne Arena: This book features 45 short essays on different reasons to stay alive and provides support for individuals with suicidal thoughts and feelings.

To find many other great resources, please visit the [Kin Family Resource Library](#) at Family Centre. The following sites provide lists of books that may be helpful if you are considering suicide, if you know someone who may be considering suicide, and if you have lost a loved one to suicide:

- http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/6684.Best_Books_on_Suicide
- <http://www.books4selfhelp.com/suicide-suicide-prevention.htm>
- <http://www.teensuicideprevention.org/books.html>

OTHER

- Access Mental Health 403-943-1500
 - Assists community members in accessing appropriate, non-emergency, services for mental health and addiction issues
- AHS Mental Health Help Line 1-877-303-2642
 - Provides confidential crisis intervention, mental health information, and referrals when necessary

Family Centre - email: info@famcentre.ca - phone: (403) 320 4232
Suite 225, 200 - 4 Avenue S., Lethbridge Centre, Lethbridge, AB T1J 4C9

- Distress Line 403-327-7905
 - Crisis intervention. Listeners are available 24 hours a day
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868
 - Provides confidential, bilingual telephone and web counselling to children and young adults (up to age 25) experiencing problems or concerns
- Mental Health Crisis Intervention Team 403-381-1116
 - Mobile support service that provides crisis intervention and referrals
 - Can provide referrals to Crisis Beds

- Distress Centre Crisis Line 1-403-266-4357
- Suicide Crisis Line 1-800-667-8089
- Suicide Prevention Crisis Line 403-320-1212

REFERENCES

- Whiston, S. C. (2009). *Principles and applications of assessment in counseling* (3rd ed.). Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning: Belmont, CA
- www.suicide.org
- www.save.org
- <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>