

# SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide is a leading cause of premature death in Canada - many of these deaths could have been prevented.

From time to time, we all experience feelings of loneliness, depression, helplessness and unhappiness. The death of a family member, the break-up of a relationship, the loss of a job or a major financial setback are serious problems we all may have to face at some point in our lives. Because each person's emotional makeup is unique, each of us responds to difficult situations differently.

For the individual who feels completely overwhelmed there is a danger that suicide may seem to be the only solution. Suicidal individuals often feel hopeless, as though there is no way out of their dilemma. Intense emotional distress often blinds a person to alternative solutions. Most suicidal crises are time-limited and based on a narrow focus. In the midst of the crisis, it is difficult to think of other possibilities - yet other solutions are almost always available.

## When Is An Individual At Greater Risk Of Making An Attempt?

An individual in crisis is at greater risk of making an attempt to commit suicide if they -

- have experienced the loss of a friend or family member
- have even the threat of a loss, through serious illness, divorce, quarrel, or their move to another city
- have experienced the loss of self-esteem through failure or rejection
- made a suicide attempt or gesture in the past
- made specific plans to commit suicide
- have a method at hand, eg pills, a gun
- have given away important personal possessions
- have been preoccupied with death
- had someone important to them who committed suicide.



If you observe clues that lead you to suspect a person may be suicidal, it is imperative that you check it out in more detail.

## If You Think The Person Is Suicidal

If someone you know is going through a very difficult time or is depressed, offering to listen may help the person talk about the problems and feelings they are experiencing. Remember to -

### Remain calm

In most cases there is no rush. Sit and listen. Really listen to what the person is saying. Give sincere understanding and emotional support for the person's feelings. Acknowledge their distress. Remember - you can not fully comprehend the depth of their despair.

### Talk about suicide & death openly

Avoiding or ignoring suicidal feelings will not make them go away. On the contrary, talking about these thoughts and feelings can be a relief and can be the first and biggest step to help the person deal with feelings of desperation and isolation.

### Encourage problem solving & positive actions

Suggest the person refrain from making any serious, irreversible decisions while in crisis. Talk about positive alternatives, which may establish hope for the future.

### Get assistance

Let the person know you are concerned and that you want to arrange for additional help and support. Do not take full responsibility by trying to be the sole support person.

Ensure that the person's physician, counsellor, or psychiatrist is informed of the suicide risk. Call another close friend or family member for additional support.

### If there is an immediate suicide risk, do not leave the person alone

Contact the local crisis line or 911 for police assistance. The person can go to any emergency ward at any time if they are afraid of their suicidal impulses.

Because shame is often involved, a person may not seek help when feeling very depressed or suicidal. If you discover that an individual is suicidal - they may ask you not to tell anyone else. It is necessary and appropriate for you to break the confidence in order to access professional help if suicide risk is suspected. It requires caring and courage to act when you know someone is going through a suicidal crisis.

### After The Immediate Crisis Has Passed, Maintain Contact

For some individuals suicide attempts occur in the few months after apparent improvement. A strong support network (family, friends, minister or priest) as well as ongoing support and monitoring by a counsellor and physician are invaluable.

Remember supporting someone who is suicidal is strenuous work, therefore it is crucial to debrief and receive emotional support for yourself afterwards. Contact your EFAP for debriefing help.

For information on local resources -  
[www.crisiscentre.bc.ca](http://www.crisiscentre.bc.ca) or [1.800.Suicide \(604.872.3311\)](tel:18003311)

Call the [HealthLinkBC HotLine](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) at 8.1.1 (<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca>)  
to speak with a trained health service representative.

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**YOUR LOGO HERE**

**For confidential assistance**  
**Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055**  
**[www.browncrawshaw.com](http://www.browncrawshaw.com)**