

To prevent suicide you need to recognize it, talk about it and get help!

Sometimes life can feel overwhelming. There is so much going on and some of it is very difficult to deal with. Failing a big test, being bullied, a break-up, that huge fight with a parent or friend, and pressure to succeed, belong and fit-in – it can all build up and, for some people, it can seem like things aren't going to get better. These feelings can lead to suicidal thoughts.

What are the warning signs of suicide?

Friends are most likely to talk to another friend when they are going through a tough time. Most people who are thinking about killing themselves drop hints or act in different ways that can sometimes clue you in that something is wrong.

- Loss of interest in family, friends, school, hobbies or part-time job
- Not doing well in class, skipping classes or having problems concentrating
- Taking more risks
- Using more drugs or alcohol
- New or increased self-harm behaviour
- Are more angry, their mood changes quickly or they're in a "flat" mood
- More fighting with family or friends
- Giving away (or throwing away) their favourite things
- Dark art, poetry or writing
- Saying things like "Everyone will be better without me", "I wish I were dead" or "I just can't take it anymore"
- They eat or sleep a lot more or a lot less. They don't take as much time to look good, do their hair or dress nicely.
- Complaining about not feeling well, such as stomach aches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- Putting themselves down or having a hard time accepting compliments
- Talking about death or suicide, making jokes about suicide like "You'll miss me when I'm gone"

How do you talk to a friend about suicide?

If you see some of the warning signs, or you feel there's something wrong, take action. Talk to your friend. Whether you go to them, or they start the conversation with you, here are some helpful tips.

- Listen – first and foremost – without judgment and with an open mind.
- Don't dismiss or minimize your friend's stress, loss or experience. If it's important to them, it's important. Feelings aren't wrong. They just are what they are, and need to be acknowledged and listened to.
- Let them know you care, that they matter to you and you want to support them in any way you can.

- Ask about suicide directly if you suspect your friend is thinking about it. People do not become more suicidal by talking about it and suicide is not an idea you can plant in someone's head. It's more likely that your friend will be relieved to be able to talk about how they feel and what they're going through. Use clear language like "are you thinking about suicide?" or "have things gotten so bad that you're thinking of killing yourself?"
- Get help. If a friend tells to you that they are feeling suicidal, you may feel pressure to keep it a secret. This is one secret that you must not keep. Tell a trusted adult like a teacher, coach, guidance counselor or parent – no matter what time of the day or night it is. It is better to risk your friend being upset with you than risk losing them to suicide. For guidance, you can also call the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa 27/7 crisis line: 613.260.2360, 1.877.377.7775 (toll free for Eastern Ontario), www.ysb.on.ca.
- If there is an immediate danger call 911. Don't take a chance when a life is at risk

What do I do if I'm thinking about killing myself?

Whether you're stressed, depressed, or just can't take it anymore — you are not alone. Don't keep these feelings to yourself. Reach out. Tell a trusted adult like a parent, aunt or uncle, teacher, coach or guidance counselor. Day or night, if you are at risk, you need to reach out. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

There are a number of local and confidential places to phone. No matter what the problem, you can talk to someone who understands and who wants to help you.

- Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa 27/7 crisis line: 613.260.2360, 1.877.377.7775 (toll free for Eastern Ontario) www.ysb.on.ca. Help may include:
 - o Supportive listening
 - o Immediate crisis counselling on the phone
 - o Information on resources and service providers in your community
 - o Referrals to child and youth service providers in your community
 - o A home-based intervention (in Ottawa only)
 - o Short-term follow-up service
- Kids Help Phone Line: 1.800.668.6868, www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Ottawa Distress Centre: 613.238.3311, www.dcottawa.on.ca

If someone close to you has died by suicide

This is not your fault, no matter what you may think or how you may feel. Sadly, one of the toughest things to cope with after a loss to suicide is a feeling of "What did I miss?" and "I should have, could have, would have..." Be kind to yourself. Remember that you did the best you could with what you knew at the time. It is normal to feel guilty or to blame yourself, but you are not to blame.

Something positive can come of this loss. Learn from it and reach out to others. Talk about mental health and wellness, learn more about suicide prevention and help reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues and suicide. You may not have been able to prevent this loss, but you can take the difficult learning from it to help make your community safer from suicide in the future.

You are not alone in your loss, and you can get help. Bereaved Families of Ontario Ottawa Chapter (www.bfo-ottawa.org, 613.567.4278) have support groups to help people who have lost a loved one to suicide. This is often a very helpful source of support after surviving the loss of someone you care about to suicide.