



Help the person stay safe for now. Thoughts of suicide usually pass.

Where can someone get support?

- Friends and Family can offer emotional and practical support and space to talk. Build a circle of support around the individual.
- There are many telephone/text helplines. Encourage the person you are worried about to put the Samaritans number in their phone - 116 123.
- Encourage the person to visit their GP who can refer them to a range of mental health services including talking treatments and Crisis support. Offer to attend the appointment with them and help them to be specific and open about their thoughts of suicide.
- Help the person complete a Safety Plan found on our website. This sets out what someone can do to help themselves when they have thoughts of suicide, and who might support them in a crisis. For more information about safety planning visit www.every-life-matters.org.uk/safety-planning or stayingssafe.net

For more information about local and national support:



In Cumbria - www.everylifematters.org.uk/self-harm



In the North East - www.stopsuicidenenc.org



What to do in an emergency

If the person has already attempted suicide, taken an overdose, seriously harmed themselves or feels unable to keep themselves safe take immediate action; Call 999 - Explain what is happening and stay with the person until the ambulance arrives.

If you are worried someone cannot stay safe, or has taken steps to end their life - and they do not want to get help or have gone missing - call the Police on 999.

If it's not an emergency but their thoughts of suicide are becoming more difficult to manage then they can:



Steps to Helping

- **Be Aware**
Watch out for the warning signs
- **Ask the Question**
Trust your instincts and ask directly if concerned.
- **Listen**
Make time to listen & explore how they're feeling.
- **Make Safe**
If they are at immediate risk take action. Contact a Helpline, call NHS 111, or 999 if it's an emergency.
- **Build Support**
Explore sources of support together, and help them write a Safety Plan.
- **Check-in**
Check in regularly once they feel more in control.

Help the person to find hope, to find their reasons for living, and to understand that right now is not the best time to make such a huge decision as ending their own life.

The smallest displays of kindness, like the offer of a brew, and the conversation that follows, could be the first step to helping someone, and could save a life....



Worried about someone?
Supporting people with thoughts of suicide



Listening Tips

Ask open questions

Avoid questions which just invite a 'yes' or 'no' answers such as 'How have you been feeling?' or 'What happened next?'. Show you are interested.

Avoid offering solutions

You don't need to fix things for the person. Avoid statements like "Have you thought of doing this? Or You should try that."

Time and privacy

Make sure you have the time and private space for them to describe where they are at.

Avoid judgements

Don't blame the person for how they are feeling and take what they say seriously. It may have been a big step to talk to you.

Don't tiptoe around the topic

Suicide is still a taboo subject. If you are worried ask directly - 'Are you thinking about suicide?'

Avoid Clichés

Such as 'Pull yourself together' or 'You're just having a bad day'.

You don't have to have all the answers

It's okay to not know what to say! You're a human being too and what you're hearing might be frightening and confusing. If you don't know what to say - be honest and tell that person.

Give re-assurance

Let the person know there is help available, and that you can look together. Let them know that you care about them.



Patiently listen to their reasons for dying while also carefully listening out for - and acknowledging - their reasons for living.

Every life matters

Suicide Safer Cumbria
every-life-matters.org.uk
Charity No.1180815



www.stopsuicidenenc.org

If you're worried that someone may be feeling suicidal it can be really hard to know what to say to them, or how you can help.

But all of us have the ability to recognise and support someone who is experiencing thoughts of suicide, and to save lives.

Thoughts of suicide can happen to anyone. People may feel suicidal because something has happened which feels too overwhelming for them to cope with. It may have been a situation that has been building up over time, an accumulation of events, or a recent event such as a relationship breakdown, redundancy or money problems.

Whatever the cause, thoughts of suicide may leave the person feeling isolated and alone, believing that people would be better off without them or that death is the only option to escape.

But thoughts of suicide aren't permanent. Things can improve and people can find their motivation to keep going and their reasons for living.

Around one in five of us will have thoughts of suicide at some point in our lifetime.



Thinking about suicide does not mean it is inevitable that someone is going to take their own life.

What are the warning signs?

Many people with thoughts of suicide do not let their friends or family know directly how they are feeling – but often there are warning signs that someone may be feeling suicidal – signs we can be alert to.

What they might say

- Talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless and trapped, having no reason to live
- Talking about being a burden to others, or that everyone would be better off without them
- Saying goodbye to friends and family as if they won't be seeing them again
- Constant negativity.

How they might behave

- Unexpected mood changes such as suddenly being calm and happy after being down
- Giving away/clearing out possessions or making a will
- Researching suicide ways to kill oneself online or other suicide related web/social media use
- Self-harming and risky behaviour including increased use of alcohol/drugs
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Lateness, carelessness or lack of interest at work
- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns
- Losing interest in things, including their appearance.

How they may be thinking or feeling

- Out of control, trapped, helpless or that no other options are left
- Feeling guilty, that they are a burden or that others would be better off without them
- Extreme mood swings or sudden rage
- Anxious, agitated or scared.

What might be happening in their lives

- A major loss or change such as a bereavement, retirement, relationship breakdown or redundancy
- Losing control of their lives through homelessness, money, work or housing problems
- Long term problems such as addiction, substance misuse, illness, chronic pain or mental health issues
- Abuse, bullying, coercion or discrimination
- An accumulation of events



How do I talk to someone about suicide?

Talking about suicide with someone you are worried about can feel like a nerve-wracking thing to do. You may find yourself tiptoeing around the subject because you're scared of saying the wrong thing, or worried you may offend the person.

But if someone is having thoughts of suicide; they may be feeling cut off from people around them, frightened and ashamed about wanting to die, or desperate for help but afraid to ask.

They may need someone to start the conversation for them – show them that they have permission to talk about it - and that they don't have to struggle with their dark and overwhelming thoughts alone.


So how will you know for sure if someone is thinking about suicide? It sounds scary, but the best thing to do is ask about it.

Ask. And ask directly -

- “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
- “Are you thinking about suicide?”
- “Sometimes when people are experiencing the problems you are it can lead to thoughts of suicide. Are you thinking about suicide?”

When you are talking about suicide you need to ask directly – this will ensure that there is no confusion - and that the person is clear you are asking them about suicide and nothing else.

Don't tiptoe around the subject, use euphemisms or make light of the subject, and don't be too quick to accept denials or jokes as responses.

 **All research shows you will not put the idea in someone's head by asking about suicide.**

Trust your gut instincts

If you are at all concerned that someone is having thoughts of suicide -

Ask. And ask directly.

