

Suicide warning signs

A Communities Matter factsheet

It can be different for everybody so it's important to treat each person and their circumstances as individual and unique. But the more warning signs there are, the higher the risk.

Some of the signs can be associated with everyday behaviour. Some people might show none of these signs or show them only in very subtle ways, but still feel suicidal. On the other hand, others might show some of these signs but are coping.

Behaviour

- Becoming isolated
- Sudden changes in mood or behaviour
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- A suicide attempt or act of self-harm
- Difficulties at school or work
- Dropping out of activities
- Disinterest in usual activities
- Sleeping or eating difficulties
- High-risk behaviours such as driving a car at high speed

Physical signs

- Neglecting their appearance, personal hygiene, clothing
- Persistent physical complaints such as chronic pain
- Weight loss or weight gain due to appetite loss or gain
- Tired or finding it difficult to concentrate

Feelings

- Depression
- Hopelessness
- Helplessness
- Failure
- Feeling life is meaningless

Thoughts

- Gloomy, negative thoughts
- Unable to find solutions to problems
- Very self-critical

Specific warning signs

Constantly thinking about death

Talking about:

- dying
- disappearing or going away

- funerals
- suicide methods or other types of self-harm
- listening to songs with a suicidal theme
- drawing or writing about suicide

The more detailed a person's plan for suicide is, the more at risk they may be.

Recent loss or other trigger

A person may be particularly vulnerable at a specific time or event such as

- anniversaries, for example of a loved one's death, a wedding or a birthday
- a life change
- change in financial circumstances
- a trauma or a loss

Putting things in order

- Tidying up affairs (such as arranging wills, childcare, care of pets and so on)
- Giving away prized possessions

If you feel someone's life is in danger, call emergency on 000.

If someone you know needs urgent crisis counselling, there are several free 24/7 telephone services including **Lifeline on 13 11 14** and the **Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467**.

And remember...

- Take all threats seriously
- Ask the person to tell you what is wrong
- Listen and offer support
- Remove anything that could be dangerous
- Don't leave the suicidal person alone
- Be positive and point out choices
- Don't promise confidentiality
- Get professional help.

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Suicide prevention for small towns and local communities