



heretohelp

Mental health and substance use
information you can trust



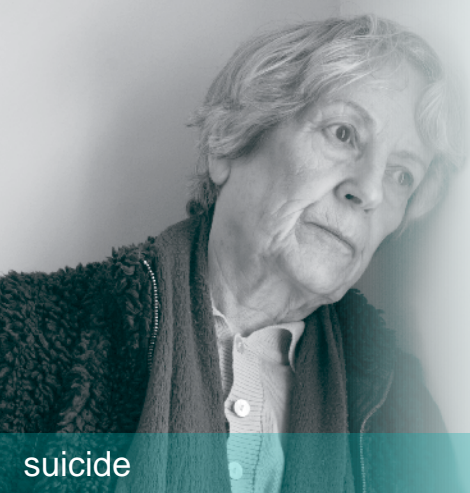
Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia
Mental health for all

suicide

Part of the Plainer Language Series

www.heretohelp.bc.ca





suicide

What is suicide?

Suicide means ending your own life. It is sometimes a way for people to escape pain or suffering. When someone ends their own life, we say that they “died by suicide.” A “suicide attempt” means that someone tried to end their life, but did not die.



Helping yourself and others

- * In BC, call 1-800-SUICIDE.
It stands for 1-800-784-2433.
- * If you think someone’s life is in danger, call 9-1-1.



What can I do if I am thinking about suicide?

Thinking about suicide is scary. You may have strong feelings that are hard to deal with. You may feel like things will never be better, but you are not alone. Many people think about suicide. Thinking about suicide does not mean that you will do it. It does not mean that you are “going crazy.” Thinking about suicide is often a sign that you want to escape.

There are ways to feel better. Remember, you are not alone. You can start by talking to someone else. You can talk to a family member or friend you trust. You can also call a crisis line. In BC, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. You can call this number whenever you need help. It is a free call. They are trained to help people.

If you have a doctor or counsellor, tell them how you feel. They can teach you skills to deal with thoughts of suicide.



suicide

How can I protect myself from suicide?

No one can say that they will never have thoughts of suicide. You can do two big things to help prevent suicide. The first is to build connections with other people. The second is to find help for mental health problems.

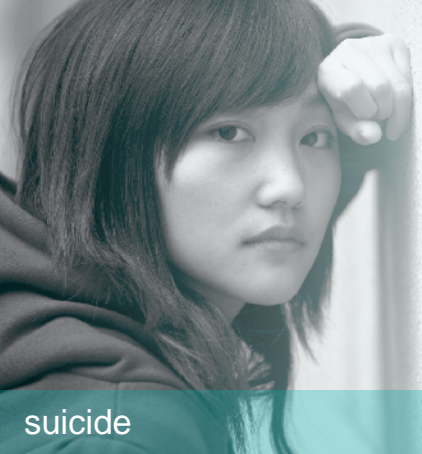
1. Build connections with other people

Feeling connected to others is a big part of protecting yourself from suicide.



Here are ways to build connections:

- Spend time with family and friends.
- Go to cultural or religious events.
- Get involved in your community. For example, sign up for classes at your community centre or college.
- Help others. For example, help out a charity or other group.



2. Get help early for mental health problems

Mental health problems are a big part of suicide. You can help protect yourself by finding help for mental health problems early. Here are common signs of mental health problems:

- Feeling like nothing makes you happy anymore.
- Feeling very sad or hopeless for many weeks.
- Feeling like you cannot cope with things that happen in your life.
- Feeling very stressed or scared for many weeks.



- Noticing strange thoughts or noticing strange things that do not go away. Some people hear voices that other people do not hear.
- Sleeping less or more than usual.
- Eating less or more than usual.
- Drinking more alcohol or using more drugs than usual.
- Taking a lot of time off work or school.
- Avoiding family and friends.
- Feeling “run down” or sick often.



Talk to your doctor if you notice these signs. Your doctor can see what may be causing the problems.



What are warning signs of suicide?

Some people talk openly about thoughts of suicide, but many people keep their feelings secret.

There are warning signs to show that someone needs help. You often see many warning signs happening at the same time. Here are some warning signs:

- The person talks about wanting to kill themselves.
- The person uses more drugs or alcohol than usual.
- The person says they have no reason to live.
- The person seems very scared or worried.
- The person says that they feel like there is no way out of a situation.
- The person cannot see hope for the future.
- The person does not want to spend time with others.
- The person has a hard time controlling their anger.
- The person does things that may be dangerous and does not think about what might happen.
- The person's mood changes in a big way.

How can I help someone who is thinking about suicide?

If you are worried about someone else, it is important to talk about suicide. Talking about suicide will not give them ideas. You need to talk about it to figure out how you can help.

Start by asking the other person if they want to end their life soon and if they have a plan.

If they do want to end their life soon and have a plan, it is an emergency. Do not leave the other person alone. Call the suicide crisis line at 1-800-784-2433. They can send emergency workers if you need them. Stay with the person until the suicide crisis line workers or emergency workers say you can leave.

If they do not have a plan to end their life, they still need extra help. You can help by listening to the other person. You can also help them find extra support.

Listen. Many people feel like they are all alone with their painful feelings. Listening shows them that they are not alone. You do not have to say much at all. You just have to be there for them. Here are some important things to remember:



- Take the other person seriously. They are in pain and they need help.
- Show the other person that you are a good person to talk to. Do not judge them or make fun of them.
- Trust is very important. Do not make promises that you cannot keep.
- Show that you understand they have a serious problem. Do not give advice like, “cheer up” or “pull yourself together.”
- Say things like, “You are really important to me” or, “I don’t want you to die.” You can also say, “It makes sense that you feel like you do, but I can help you find other solutions.”

Connect them with support. Ask if they can talk to someone about their feelings. It could be a family member or a friend. It could also be a doctor or counsellor. You can also give them the phone number for the crisis line. The people who run crisis lines are trained to help others. They can help with many different problems. In BC, call 1-800-SUICIDE. It stands for 1-800-784-2433. You can call at any time. It is a free call. For help in another language, say the name of the language in English.

Remember, no one expects you to be a counsellor.

If you are worried about yourself or another person, call the crisis line at 1-800-784-2433. If you think that someone's life is in danger, call 9-1-1.

Myths and facts of suicide

- **Myth:** Suicide is not very common.
- **Fact:** Someone dies by suicide almost every day in BC.



- **Myth:** Thinking about suicide is not very common.
 - **Fact:** One in every nine people has thought about suicide at some time.
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- **Myth:** Someone who wants to die by suicide just wants to die.
 - **Fact:** People who die by suicide do not necessarily want to end their lives. They want to get rid of bad things in their lives. They do not know what else to do.
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- **Myth:** People who attempt suicide just want attention.
 - **Fact:** A suicide attempt does show that someone needs help. People who attempt suicide often think it is the only way to stop their pain. Their feelings are very real and very hard to deal with.

- **Myth:** People who survive a suicide attempt will never try to end their life again.
- **Fact:** Most people who die by suicide have attempted suicide in the past.

- **Myth:** Only people with a mental illness think about suicide.
- **Fact:** You do not need to have a mental illness to think about suicide. Some people think about suicide because they do not know what else to do. But many people who attempt suicide or die by suicide have a mental illness. They may not know they have a mental illness at the time.

- **Myth:** Talking about suicide will make people think about dying by suicide.
- **Fact:** Talking about suicide does not give people ideas. Talking honestly about suicide is a good way to find out if someone needs help. Talking about suicide lowers the risk of suicide.



What if someone I love dies by suicide?

Losing a loved one by suicide can be very hard. You may wonder if you could have done more to help them. You may not understand why it happened. You may feel ashamed and angry. On top of these feelings, other people may treat you differently because they do not understand suicide.

It is important to know that suicide is not your fault. Many things go into someone's decision to end their life.

Here are a few ways to cope with loss:

- It is okay to feel many different things. Remind yourself that your feelings are real.
- Talk with your family and friends. Let everyone share their feelings.
- Some people may not know how to help you. It is okay to tell them what you need.
- Find a support group in your community. It may be helpful to talk to other people who lost a loved one by suicide.
- Remember that healing takes time. You can take as much time as you need.
- Honour your loved one's life in a way that is meaningful to you.

If you are having a hard time coping, it is a good idea to talk to a counsellor. Your doctor can help you find a counsellor.

Where can I learn more about preventing suicide?

You can talk to your doctor or counsellor about suicide. You can also look at these resources:

BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information

Visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca for fact sheets and other useful information. You can learn more about mental health and substance use problems. You can also read stories and connect with others.

Coping with Suicidal Thoughts

This document has very useful information on how to stay safe. It can help you understand your feelings and take steps to feel better. Visit www.comh.ca/publications/pages/cwst

www.here-to-help.bc.ca

This booklet was written by the Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division. It is based on current research and resources. We also check key facts with doctors and other mental health experts. Please contact us if you want to know what resources we used.

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HeretoHelp is a project to the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. The BC Partners are:

- AnxietyBC
- BC Schizophrenia Society
- Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division
- Centre for Addictions Research of BC
- FORCE Society for Kid's Mental Health
- Family Services of the North Shore, Jessie's Legacy Program
- Mood Disorders Association of BC

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