

Suicide Prevention SAMH 2020

In 2018 in Scotland there were 784 deaths by suicide, the rate for male suicide was three times that for females.

The below looks at how you can spot the signs, support the individual and what supports and services you can connect them with.

Spotting the signs?

How might someone with thoughts of suicide present? What might we see, sense, hear or learn?



A common myth is that people will not talk about their thoughts of suicide but people can and do often talk about thoughts of suicide.

Asking about suicide?

If you think someone is thinking about suicide you must ask the question. We know this can feel difficult or even scary but it is the best way to open up the conversation about suicide and must be asked.

How to ask?

The question must be asked in a direct and neutral way.

Try to **avoid** leading questions, for example 'you're *not* thinking of....'
Try to **avoid** asking questions that may seem to contain judgement, for example 'are you thinking of doing something *silly*'

(the reason for a person to think about suicide may seem trivial or even unimportant but to that person it is life or death)

Try to **avoid** questions that aren't clearly about suicide such as

- Have you thought about what happens when you die?
- Have you ever thought about dying?
- Have you ever thought about hurting yourself?

Try to **ask a neutral and closed question** where the answer can be either 'yes' or 'no' about them taking action to end their own life.

- **Are you thinking about suicide?**
- **Are you thinking about killing yourself?**
- **Are you thinking about ending your life?**

Asking someone who does not have thoughts of suicide about suicide **CANNOT** put the idea in their head. If you think someone may be thinking about suicide **ALWAYS** ask the question.

Listening

Asking the question must never be asked in isolation and must be followed up. If they answer yes to your question about suicide, then it is important to give them time and space to share their story.

Listening feels like it should be easy but again we know it can be difficult, encouraging a person to talk about their thoughts of suicide is important and helpful.

There is no expectation for you to 'fix' whatever is happening for that person. It is important that we allow a person to talk about their feelings without judgement and direct them towards a suitable support.

Things to remember

- Try not to make judgement regarding the reason someone may be feeling suicidal, try to focus on how they are feeling rather than the trigger or event that led to them feeling that way.
- Try not to react to behaviours shown when someone is feeling suicidal, try to remember it is again the feeling behind the behaviour that is important.

Helpful questions

- Why do you think you are feeling this way?
- What makes you feel this way?
- How long have you been feeling this way?
- Who else have you told?
- What can we do to help you?
- What support do you think you need?

Supports available

After we have heard the persons story, it is important that we connect them with someone who can further support or help them. This could be a friend, family member or a service. Given the unprecedented times we are currently living in, many services may be closed or may have changed the way they operate so it is important to have a basic knowledge of local support services and how to access them.

You are not alone in supporting an individual and there are many supports available, both locally and nationally. Whilst it is important to have a basic knowledge of these services, it can be impossible to remember them all.

NHS 24

The NHS 24 111 service provides urgent health care advice out of hours, when your GP practice or dentist is closed.

Tel: 111

Breathing Space

A confidential phone line for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16, feeling low, anxious or depressed.

Tel: 0800 83 85 87

Samaritans

24 hour, free phone non judgemental listening service

Tel: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

GP

We also suggest that you explore what supports (professional or personal) the individual currently has, has helped them in the past or who they feel would support them. We encourage engagement with a GP and GP practice.

Distress Brief Intervention Programme - DBI

From Monday 8th of June, anyone who phones NHS 24 from anywhere in Scotland can be referred to the Distress Brief Intervention Programme (DBI) for further support, when appropriate.

DBI provides an 'ask once – get help fast' early intervention for people 16 and over in distress/emotional pain who do not need urgent medical treatment.

When linking an individual to a service, try to offer a 'warm hand off' where you introduce the person to the service and the service to them, this is likely to encourage more successful engagement compared to handing an individual a leaflet or number.

You may be aware of local groups, services or apps and we would encourage you to understand how these local services work and how they could support you and share this information within your workplaces and communities.

Some safety tips

- If you feel an individual is at immediate risk of death or harm to themselves or someone else, phone 999.
- Even a successful intervention can feel stressful and emotional, make sure you debrief with a colleague or manager following any such conversation, the Samaritans also offer a debrief service.
- These times are testing for us all, look after yourself and ensure self-care every day.
- Be kind to yourself and others.

End.