

Engaging with Individuals Threatening Self-Harm or Suicide



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Risk Factors Associated with Suicide

- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Mental health diagnosis
- Social withdrawal or isolation
- Ready access to lethal means
- Unemployment
- Homelessness
- Alcohol or drugs misuse
- Addictive behaviours
- Debilitating or terminal illness
- Experience of bullying, abuse, trauma or neglect (without resolution)
- Loss or bereavement
- Domestic abuse
- LGBTQ+ community

**Men in their
mid to late
forties are
at most risk
of suicide**



Warning Signs of Suicide

- Expressions of hopelessness or helplessness
- Low self-esteem, feeling worthless or unwanted
- Overwhelming sense of shame, guilt or being a burden to others
- A dramatic change in personality or appearance
- 'Out of character' behaviour or extreme emotional turbulence
- Changed eating or sleeping habits
- A serious drop in school or work performance
- Little interest in the present or the future
- Written or spoken notice of intention to carry out suicide
- Use of suicide chat-rooms and pro-suicide internet sites
- Giving away possessions or organising personal affairs
- Sudden unexplained 'recovery'
- Self-harming, risky or addictive behaviours



Build a Rapport



Trust



Influence and Persuasion



SAFETY FIRST

Do not put yourself at risk

Give the person space
Stay well away from the edge
No not try and grab them
Do not creep towards them

Dial 999 – ask for the Coastguard



Let's Talk

Don't be afraid to ask the question – are you considering taking your own life?

- Suicide should not be a taboo subject we are afraid to discuss
- Talking about suicide will not give people encouragement to attempt it
- Suicide should not be viewed as attention seeking, but a sign that someone needs help
- Any indication that someone is considering suicide should be treated respectfully
- Suicide is not illegal – avoid using the word 'committed'.



Engaging with Individuals Threatening Self-Harm or Suicide – What can help?

- Effective Listening Skills
- Be yourself – natural and honest
- Let the person vent
- Encourage them to self-rescue
- Convey that you are there to help
- Be patient, and keep going – even if they're not engaging
- Look for hooks
- Use one voice
- Be aware that a small thing to you could be huge to them



Engaging with Individuals Threatening Self-Harm or Suicide – Helpful Responses

- “I am sorry to hear that you feel that way”
- “From what I’m hearing, it sounds like you really mean what you’re saying”
- “I really want you to keep talking to me”
- “I will stay with you until...”
- “You were saying that you felt...”
- “Why today? Why here?”
- “I can’t begin to understand what you’re going through”
- Emotional labelling – “You look / sound...”



Engaging with Individuals Threatening Self-Harm or Suicide – What to avoid

- Don't try to analyse a person's motives
- Don't provide direct advice, try to solve their problems or provide them with therapy
- Avoid being an expert in mental health
- Don't say it will be ok. You don't know that it will be. Offer hope, not a solution
- Don't ridicule them or use guilt or emotional blackmail to try and dissuade them
- Don't lecture or judge them



Police Negotiator Tips – Things to Avoid

- Don't tell them you know how they feel
- Don't minimise the intensity of their feelings
- Don't assume that someone is making an idle threat
- Don't lie or make promises you can't keep
- Don't give them anything unless it's life or death (concessions)
- Don't be sworn to secrecy



If the person chooses to end their life...

- It's not your fault
- They put themselves there, not you
- You were only ever involved because you tried to help
- Walk away and don't look
- Seek support and be honest
- It's not your fault



Available Support

Get advice from 111 or ask for an urgent GP appointment if:

- you need urgent help for your mental health

Get help from [111 online](#) or call [111](#) and select the mental health option.



Call 999 or go to A&E now if:

- someone's life is at risk – for example, they have seriously injured themselves or taken an overdose
- you do not feel you can keep yourself or someone else safe

A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a physical one. You will not be wasting anyone's time.

Call: [999](#)



Feeling low?
Anxious?
Struggling to cope?

Text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential support, 24/7

SAMARITANS
Call free day or night on
116 123



Any Questions?

