

# PARENTS AND CARERS

As a parent or caregiver, you can play a major role in identifying if your child is considering suicide.

## What are suicidal feelings?

- Suicide occurs when someone intentionally takes his or her own life.
- Suicide feelings can range from being preoccupied by distressing thoughts about ending your life or feeling people would be better off without you to thinking about methods of suicide or making clear plans to take your own life.
- Everyone's experience of suicidal feelings is unique to them. These feelings may build up over time or be intense from the start. They can fluctuate from time to time and it is common not to understand why you feel this way.

## Getting help in an emergency

**If you don't feel you can keep your child/young person safe right now, seek immediate help.**

**Go to any hospital A&E department (sometimes known as the emergency department)**

**Call 999 and ask for an ambulance if you can't get to A&E**

## Why do children and young people become suicidal?

There are many reasons why children and young people become suicidal. A suicide rarely has just one cause. The teenage years are an extremely stressful time for many children. Untreated mental illness, especially depression, is the leading cause for suicide. Many people who die by suicide suffer from untreated or poorly treated depression resulting from difficult life experiences. These life experiences might include family changes or illness, loss of family or friends, and feeling lonely, helpless, hopeless or depressed.

## Is there a link between self-harm and suicide?

Self-harm means that someone harms themselves on purpose. Self-harm isn't a mental health condition, but it is often linked to mental distress.

Someone who self-harms don't usually want to die. They may self-harm to deal with life, rather than a way of trying to end it.

But self-harm can increase the risk of suicide. Someone may accidentally end their life. Someone who self-harms should be taken seriously and offered help.

## How do I know if my child is at risk for suicide?

The following factors may increase the risk of suicide or attempted suicide. However, these risk factors do not always lead to a suicide.

- Depression and other mental disorders, or a substance-abuse disorder (often combined with other mental disorders)
- Feeling hopeless and worthless, like there is no point in living
- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- Physical illness
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder/ Neuro Developmental concerns
- Feeling detached and isolated from friends, peers and family

- Family history of suicide, mental illness, or depression
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Knowing someone with suicidal behaviour, such as a family member, friend, or celebrity
- Coping with own identity in an unsupportive family, community, or hostile school environment

## What are warning signs or behaviours that my child may be thinking about suicide?

Suicide often occurs after a recent stressful life event in the family, with a friend, or at school. A change in your child/young person's personality and behaviour might be a sign that they are having suicidal thoughts. You may be the best judge of when your child/young person is behaving differently. It is important for you to know the warning signs for suicide so you can get your child/young person the help she/he needs. A child/young person who is considering suicide might have one or more of these behaviours:

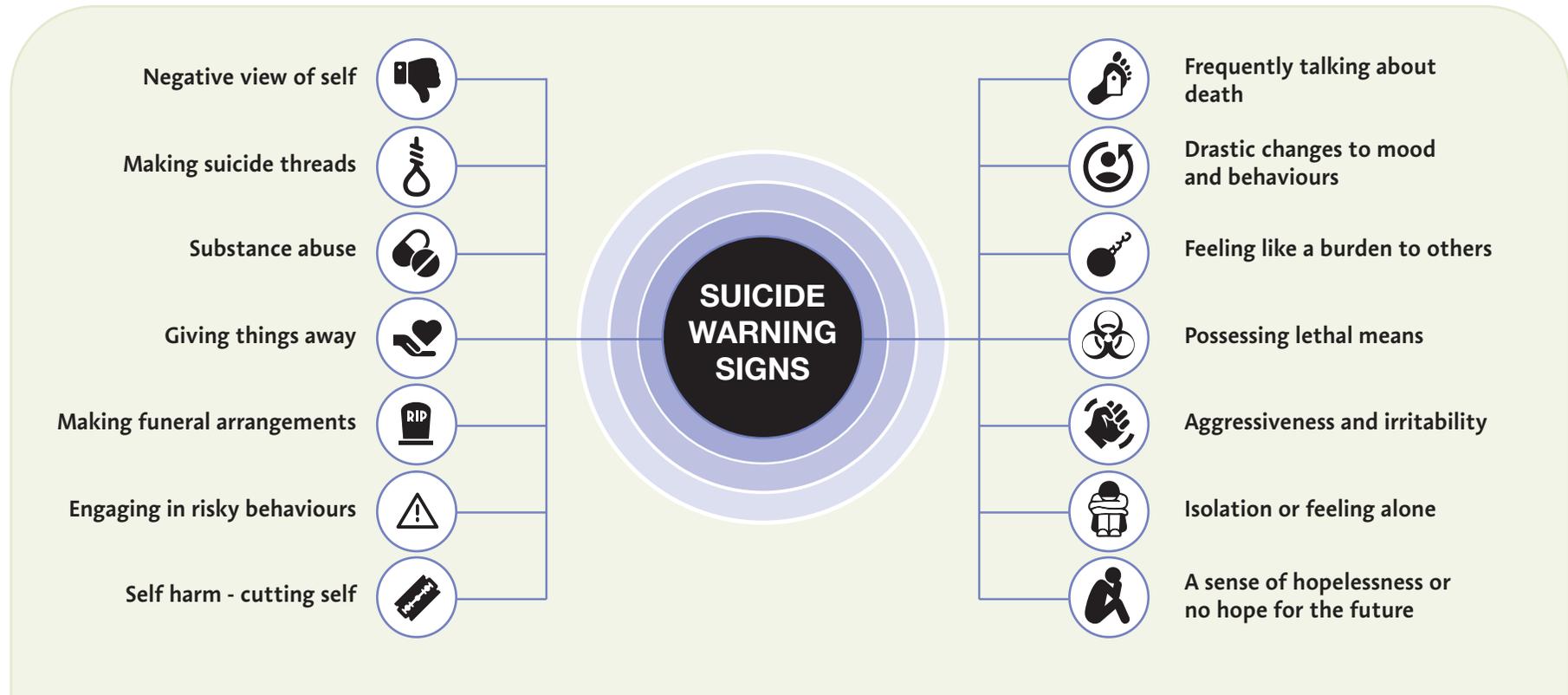
Signs that something is wrong can sometimes be more difficult to spot. Such as a cheeriness which may seem fake to you. Or they may joke about their emotions. Such as saying something quite alarming that is disguised as a joke.

Don't ignore your gut feeling if you are concerned about your child. Some children won't be open about how they are feeling.

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## How can I help my child who is thinking or talking about suicide?

Talking about suicide can be a plea for help. Don't assume that your child won't attempt to take their own life if they talk about suicide. Always take suicidal feelings seriously.

If you are not sure that someone is feeling suicidal, ask:

- "Are you thinking about suicide?" or
- "Are you having thoughts of ending your life?"

These questions are direct. It is better to address the child's feelings directly rather than avoiding the issue. Asking about suicide won't make it more likely to happen.

## How do I keep them safe?

It is unlikely that you will be able to make their feelings go away, but you can help them by: not leaving them on their own, talking to them, let them know that you care, love and want to support them and that they are not alone, If your child does not feel comfortable talking to you, suggest that s/he talk to another trusted adult. Listening to what they have to say will at least let them know you care. Repeat their words back to them in your own words. This shows that you are listening.

- Be non-judgmental. Don't criticise or blame them.
- reassure them that they will not feel this way forever,
- encourage them to focus on getting through the day rather than focusing on the future
- Seek professional help. see section above on Getting help in an emergency
- helping them to create a crisis plan, and
- Removing items that they can end their life with. The removal of items will depend on what their immediate plan is to end their life. Examples include:
  - sharp objects such as razor blades and knives,
  - cleaning products,
  - drugs, and
  - belts, cords, wires and rope.

## What is a crisis plan?

A crisis plan is sometimes called a safety plan. Ideally a crisis plan should be made before someone is in crisis, but it is never too late to start. The aim of a crisis plan is to think about what support someone needs when they are in crisis.

This may include:

- not being alone,
- removing certain objects from the home,
- talking to a certain person or helpline,
- talking to a professional,
- distraction techniques, and
- Including reasons to live, such as pictures of family.

Distraction techniques can include:

- Read a book or magazine
- Watch a film or TV
- Go to a museum
- Walk in a green space like a park
- Draw or paint
- Listen to music
- Sing
- Listen to nature
- Spend time with a pet



## Where can I find further help and support from?

**NHS Mental Health Crisis Line:** Telephone: 0300 456 83 42

Mindsight Surrey CAMHS: <https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/mindsightsurreycamhs/about-us/parents-carers>

Provide help and support to children and young people when they begin to feel emotionally or mentally unwell to build wellbeing and resilience to reduce the chances of their condition becoming more serious.

**Access CAMHS Single Point of Access** - we have a single point of contact for referrals and booking appointments. Telephone: 0300 222 5755 for help

**Young Minds:** <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Is leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered, whatever the challenges. We're here to make sure they get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties

**Our Parents Helpline** is available to offer advice to parents and carers worried about a child or young person under 25. Call us for free Mon-Fri from 9.30am to 4pm  
Telephone: 0808 802 5544

**GP:** Call your GP if you know who they are. A GP may be able to offer support in a crisis. If the GP surgery is closed there will be a recorded message to tell you who to call.

**NHS 111:** NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. Dial 111 on your phone. It is a free service. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Stay Alive suicide prevention app:**

Key features include:

- Quick access to national crisis support helplines
- A mini-safety plan that can be filled out by a person considering suicide
- A Life Box to which the user can upload photos from their phone reminding them of their reasons to stay alive
- Strategies for staying safe from suicide
- How to help a person thinking about suicide
- Suicide myth-busting
- Research-based reasons for living
- Online support services and other helpful apps
- Suicide bereavement resources