

MINDMATTERS SPOTLIGHTS: SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide prevention key factors

Suicide prevention begins with being able to recognise the common key factors that can lead to imminent risk.

Use this factsheet to guide your early intervention actions and to build protective factors that can improve a young person's ability to cope with difficulties.

RISK FACTORS

- Mental health problems.
- Gender – male (although females more likely to attempt suicide).
- Family discord, violence or abuse.
- Family/close friend history of suicide.
- Alcohol or other substance abuse.
- Social or geographic location.
- Financial stress.
- Bereavement/loss.
- Prior suicide attempts.
- Non-suicidal self-injury.

WARNING SIGNS

- Hopelessness.
- Feeling trapped – like there's no way out.
- Increasing alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, school, society.
- No reason for living, no sense of purpose in life.
- Uncharacteristic or impaired judgement or behaviour.
- Feeling like a burden to others.
- Emotional pain.
- Abnormal sleep patterns.

TIPPING POINT

- Relationship issues/ending.
- Loss of status or respect, feeling shamed.
- Debilitating physical illness or accident or chronic pain.
- Death or suicide or attempted suicide of relative or friend.
- Suicide of someone famous or member of peer group or someone relatable.
- Argument at home.
- Being abused or bullied.
- Media report on suicide or suicide methods.
- Failure (exam, job interview, uni application).

IMMINENT RISK OF SUICIDE

- Expressed intent or threat to die .
- Has plan in mind or talks about plan.
- Has access to lethal means.
- Impulsive, aggressive or anti-social behaviour.
- Giving possessions away or saying goodbye to family and friends.
- Talking, writing or drawing about death (especially when out of character).
- Engaging in reckless or risky behaviours.
- Dramatic changes in mood, such as sudden feelings of happiness after a long period of sadness or depression.
- Saying they have no reason for living; that they are a burden; that they feel trapped; that they don't belong.
- Extreme agitation.
- Sleep deprivation.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Supportive social relationships and sense of social connections.
- Strong sense of self.
- Good communication skills.
- Family harmony.
- Supportive and caring parents/family.
- Sense of belonging.
- Safe, secure and affordable living environment.
- Positive educational experience.
- Access to social supports and caring services.
- Financial security.
- Positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Good physical health and ability to move about freely.
- No alcohol or other drug problems.
- Sense of control of life's circumstances.
- Sense of meaning and purpose in life.
- Good coping skills.
- Positive outlook and attitude to life.
- Employment.
- Absence of shame and guilt.
- Fair and tolerant community/society.