



MENTAL HEALTH • YOUTH WELLBEING • COMMUNITY CARE

SUICIDE PREVENTION: STARTING CONVERSATIONS THAT CAN SAVE LIVES

Creating supportive communities where young people feel heard, valued, and able to ask for help.



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Suicide is a serious public health and mental health concern that affects individuals, families, schools, universities, workplaces, and entire communities. Yet behind every conversation about suicide is something deeply human: a person who may be experiencing overwhelming emotional pain and needs support.

For young people, the pressures of academic life, relationships, family expectations, financial difficulties, bullying, social isolation, uncertainty about the future, and other personal challenges can sometimes become difficult to manage. When distress becomes overwhelming, a young person may feel as though there is no way forward.

Suicide prevention begins by ensuring that no one has to face that pain alone.

“You don't need to have all the answers. Sometimes, being willing to listen and help someone find support is enough to make a difference.”

Breaking the Silence

One of the biggest barriers to suicide prevention is stigma. Young people may be afraid to talk about their struggles because they fear being judged, misunderstood, mocked, or labelled as weak.

Creating safe spaces for honest conversations can change this. Schools, universities, families, youth organizations, churches, communities, and other institutions can encourage young people to speak openly about emotional wellbeing. Listening without immediately judging or dismissing someone's feelings can help them feel valued and supported.

Sometimes, simply asking "Are you okay?" and genuinely listening can be the beginning of an important conversation.

Recognising When Someone May Be Struggling

There is no single sign that can predict suicide risk, and warning signs can vary from person to person. However, significant changes in behaviour or emotional wellbeing deserve attention.

- Persistent hopelessness or extreme emotional distress.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or activities.
- Sudden changes in behaviour, mood, sleep, or appetite.
- Expressing feelings of being a burden or having no reason to live.
- Giving away important possessions or saying goodbye in unusual ways.
- A noticeable decline in school or university participation.
- Talking about death, suicide, or wanting to disappear.

A warning sign should never be ignored or treated as attention-seeking.

Listen, Don't Judge

Instead of saying:

"You have nothing to worry about."
"Other people have bigger problems."
"Just be strong."

Try saying:

"I'm glad you told me."
"I'm here to listen."
"You don't have to go through this alone."
"Let's find someone who can help you."

Listening does not mean having all the answers. It means being present, taking the person seriously, and helping connect them with appropriate support.

Encouraging Professional Help

Friends and peers can provide important support, but they should not be expected to solve a mental health crisis on their own.

A person experiencing severe emotional distress should be encouraged to connect with a counsellor, psychologist, healthcare professional, trusted adult, or another appropriate support service.

If someone appears to be in immediate danger, do not leave them alone. Seek urgent help from appropriate emergency or healthcare services and involve a trusted responsible adult where appropriate.

Building Protective Communities

Suicide prevention is not only about responding when someone is in crisis. It is also about creating environments where young people can develop resilience and feel connected.

- ✓ Accessible counselling and referral services.
- ✓ Peer-support and mental health clubs.
- ✓ Anti-bullying programmes.
- ✓ Life-skills and resilience workshops.
- ✓ Safe spaces for students to talk about emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ Mental health awareness campaigns.
- ✓ Training teachers, student leaders, and peer supporters to recognise distress and respond appropriately.
- ✓ Strong partnerships between educational institutions, families, healthcare providers, and community organisations.

Hope Can Be Rebuilt

Someone experiencing suicidal thoughts may feel trapped in the present moment, but feelings can change and support can make a difference. Recovery is possible, and difficult circumstances do not have to determine a person's future.

This is why suicide prevention must go beyond awareness. It requires compassion, listening, early intervention, professional support, and communities that make people feel that they matter.

As we mark Mental Health Awareness Week, let us make a commitment to look out for one another. Let us check on our friends, listen without judgement, challenge stigma, and encourage people to seek help when they need it.

A conversation may not solve everything, but it can open a door to support.

5 WAYS YOUNG PEOPLE CAN SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER

01	CHECK IN Don't wait for someone to ask for help. Ask how they are doing and listen to the answer.
02	LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT Give them space to express themselves without criticism or dismissing their feelings.
03	TAKE CONCERNS SERIOUSLY Never assume that someone is simply seeking attention when they express severe emotional distress.
04	CONNECT THEM TO HELP Encourage professional support and involve a trusted adult or appropriate service when necessary.
05	STAY CONNECTED A simple message, phone call, or visit can remind someone that they are not alone.

A MESSAGE TO EVERY YOUNG PERSON

Your struggles matter. Your feelings matter. Your life matters.

If you are struggling, please don't carry it alone. Reach out to someone you trust and seek professional support.

Community of Care Initiative — promoting mental health awareness, suicide prevention, resilience, and supportive communities.