

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- 1) You can help the suicidal person learn that help is available.
- 2) Many people who accept professional help following a suicide attempt are able to learn new coping skills to reduce the likelihood of further attempts.
- 3) Many of those who initially refuse professional help after a suicide attempt will accept help at a later date. **Don't give up!**
- 4) To educate yourself, contact the suicide prevention resource in your area.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem

SUICIDE FACTS

- You are not alone. While suicide may not have the same visibility as AIDS or cancer, you probably have a friend or relative who has lost someone to suicide.
- Suicide crosses all social, economic and cultural boundaries. A significant percentage of people who commit suicide appeared to be functioning well prior to their death. It can happen to anyone.
- Canada has a suicide rate that is among the highest in the world. Women have a lower rate of death by suicide, but current trends show their attempts are becoming more lethal.
- Most people think about suicide at some point in their lives.
- Those who complete suicide may have made a previously attempt. A suicide attempt is a strong predictor of a potential suicide.



**living with
someone who is
SUICIDAL**



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WHY DO PEOPLE ATTEMPT SUICIDE?

Suicidal people feel that they can no longer cope with their problems and that suicide is the only way out.

The suicidal person's feelings usually result from the perception that their life is a never-ending downward spiral. Even if they seem to have a lot going for them, they may feel powerless to live up to their own expectations of themselves.

They feel hopeless, helpless and worthless. They can't feel the love, support and acceptance of friends and relatives. They often hide their pain from those who care and those who can help.

IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?

While society can offer help and support, ultimately it is the suicidal person who has to choose to accept help; to choose life over death. But when a loved one is hurting we want to step in and "fix it".

With suicide, real change only begins when the suicidal person begins to believe there is hope and help. Our direct "take charge and fix it" actions are not likely to be effective and we shouldn't even try. What we can do is provide networks of caring and support for both ourselves and the suicidal person.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

1) Obtain immediate help for the crisis

- If the person is currently suicidal, phone your local police, ambulance or crisis centre or take the person to the Hospital Emergency Room.
- Sometimes you find out about an attempted suicide long after the event. You may feel that now you need help.

- Because of the perceived stigma of suicide, you may not feel that it is OK to turn to family, friends or church for emotional support and information.
- Contact a crisis centre or local service agency to get immediate emotional support to help you come to grips with the situation and to coach you on how to approach the suicidal person and to help you find further support and information.

2) Get the person to a doctor for a complete physical

- With the permission of the suicidal person, give the doctor any information that might help provide a broader picture to see past the "happy face" a suicidal person often wears.

3) Prepare a network of support

- While respecting the suicidal person's right to privacy, develop a caring community of people who would be friends and also watch for signs of stress.
- Be aware that suicidal behaviour can reoccur. Learn who to contact and what to do if there is another suicide attempt.

4) Learn new ways to respond

- Living with a person who has attempted suicide is difficult. They can be loving and apparently fine or they can seem happy even when they are not. They may not know how to ask for help, so instead they act out or withdraw and rebuff your offers to talk or help.

- You may feel like you're walking on a tightrope and don't know when to reach out and when to stand back. Friends and relatives may have conflicting views about what to do. Maintaining too high expectations, ignoring the problem or giving in are not healthy for you or helpful for the suicidal person.
- These are difficult decisions to make and as a friend/parent/spouse you want to make the best choices. Get professional help to learn ways to respond and help you understand the options that are available.

5) Self-care is essential at a time like this

- People living in long term high stress or uncontrollable situations such as this are prime targets themselves for clinical depression, stress, physical ailments and a diminished ability to effectively manage family, relationships and work issues.
- If you feel your own life is out of control, it will be more difficult to provide a positive framework for someone else in a crisis. Serious attention to your own physical and emotional health is imperative.
- Share your situation with a family doctor who can provide proper support and referrals. Face up to family, marital and work issues by taking advantage of community resources or your company's Employee Assistance Program.
- Find that special friend to share your pain. Explore meditation, spiritual retreats, self-help courses, support groups, reading or music to find your inner peace and strength.
- The important part during this time is not "who" or "how", but that you find safe places and safe people willing to support you on this difficult journey.

