



Concerned about a friend or family member's mental well-being? Follow these 5 steps to check on them and any potential suicide risk.

In an emergency always call 000.
For support call Lifeline: 13 11 14.

Key Facts:

- Suicide is *the leading* cause of death of Australians aged 15-44 years and 4th leading cause of death for ages 45+.
- 70-90% of persons who die by suicide communicated risk factors and warning signs to family and friends. Only 20-30% reached out to a professional.
- 50% of persons who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental illness while the other 50% often experienced acute crises.
- The community can help in the early detection of the latter 50% and referral to professionals, potentially mitigating suicide risk and preventing suicide.

STEP 1. NOTICE All Risk Factors & Warning Signs

Risk Factors:

1. LOSS/CHANGE

- Relationship break-up
- Job loss
- Money loss
- Health deterioration/diagnosis

2. INTENSE EMOTION

- Shame or guilt
- Hopelessness or worthlessness

3. HISTORY

- Trauma
- Previous suicide attempt or self-harm
- Family member who died by suicide

4. SITUATIONAL

- Unemployed
- Isolated
- Living alone
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Discrimination or rejection
- Chronic pain

5. IDENTITY

- Male
- LGBTIQAP+ orientation
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background

Warning Signs:

1. LANGUAGE

- I can't do this anymore.
- I won't be around forever.
- I just want to go to sleep and not wake up.

2. MOOD

- Withdrawn
- Sudden relief/relaxed mood
- Different to usual energy and character
- Losing interest in previous activities

3. PHYSICAL

- Sleep issues.
- Taking less care of appearance.
- Weight loss or gain.

4. BEHAVIOUR

- Giving away possessions
- Writing a will
- Writing a manual for a business or lists of passwords to access accounts
- Writing letters
- Writing suicide notes
- Researching ways to die
- Buying or getting access to something dangerous
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Increased high risk behaviour
- Self-harm behaviour

STEP 2. INTERPRET All Signs as Important/Urgent

- Suicide is hard to predict, even for professionals.
- Take all signs seriously.
- If someone presents with just one risk factor, e.g., relationship break-up, act.
- If someone shows just one warning sign, e.g., saying 'I can't do this anymore', act.
- Asking about suicide won't put the idea in their head.
- It will provide relief and give them a chance to talk and get help.
- It is better to ask and be wrong than not ask at all.

STEP 3. Take PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY to Help or Get Help

- Most people when presented with a situation needing action do nothing due to:
 - Fear of making it worse.
 - Fear of making a mistake.
 - Fear of embarrassment.
 - Lacking knowledge, skill and confidence to help.
 - Hoping someone else will help.
- Don't wait for someone else to do something.

- If we all wait, nothing happens leaving persons at risk vulnerable.
- Take any small step you can or ask someone else to step in.

STEP 4. KNOW What to Say/Ask/Do

- **SAY:**
 - “You’ve had a lot going on lately with [INSERT WARNING/RISK FACTOR] (e.g, losing your job)”.
- **ASK:**
 - “With all this going on, have you had any thoughts about suicide?”
 - If yes, ask if they have thought about how/where/when and if they are finding it hard to not act on the thoughts.
 - If yes, get them to see a GP as soon as possible and make sure they are supported until then. If they can’t keep themselves safe that day, take them to hospital. Call 000 in an emergency.
 - If no, keep listening. You don’t have to fix it, just give them space to talk.
- **DO:**
 - Encourage help-seeking: help book GP and/or counselling appointments, encourage them to speak to family, friend, coach, chaplain, boss.
 - Follow-up: check-in.

- **How to Listen:**
 - You seem overwhelmed.
 - It makes sense you have been feeling hopeless.
 - This must be difficult.
 - I can see why you are feeling so low.
 - I may not know how to help but I care and I am here.
 - You are not alone.
 - You are important and your life matters.
 - I am here to listen.

LONGER-TERM support:

1. REDUCE STRESS

- Reduce commitments and stressors where possible.

2. INCREASE CONNECTION

- Increase social support.

3. INCREASE MEANING

- Employment, volunteering, study.

4. INCREASE ACTIVITY

- Sport and hobbies.

5. IMPROVE HEALTH

- Improve diet, sleep, exercise.
- Reduce alcohol and drug use.

STEP 5. DECIDE and Plan to Help

- Say, ask, do or find someone else to help.
- Asking won’t make it worse.
- You don’t need to have any answers.
- Just notice, show up, ask, listen, validate and call for professional help in an emergency.
- **Plan your first step:** a phone call or text to check in with someone. Write yours here:

KNOW what NOT to say/ask/do:

- **DON’T SAY:**
 - I know how you feel.
 - Don’t worry so much.
 - It’s not that bad.
 - Just try...
 - You should...
 - Think of the positives.
 - Others have it worse.
- **DON’T ASK:**
 - You’re not going to do something stupid are you?
 - What have you got to be sad about?
- **DON’T DO:**
 - Forget to check in or follow-up.
 - Become too involved. Be their cheerleader or coach from the sideline.
 - React strongly with shock, anger or frustration.
 - Talk about methods or locations to suicide (this can increase risk).

How to LISTEN:

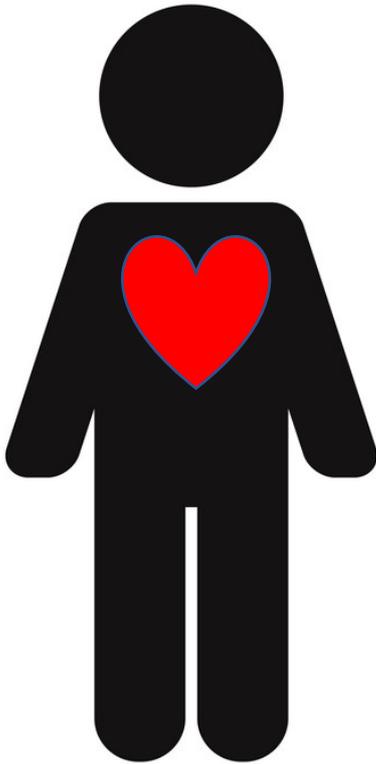
- **Encourage Talking:**
 - What has been going on for you?
 - How long have you felt this way?
 - What has added to your stress lately?



Final Notes:

Take care of YOURSELF:

- Supporting others can be difficult.
- Maintain healthy relationship boundaries.
- While it is important we all take personal responsibility to do something or find someone who can, the person at risks'
 - Past
 - Response
 - The outcome
- ... is not your responsibility.
- All we can do is know the signs and act on the signs by asking, listening and getting the person to a professional.
- If someone you know or asked or did not ask later makes an attempt to end their life or does end their life, seek support for yourself immediately.



Self-care!

Support Options:

Telephone:

You and others don't need to wait for an emergency to call. These services are there to listen.

- **Lifeline**
 - 24-hour national telephone crisis counselling service and online counselling.
 - P: 13 11 14. W: www.lifeline.org.au
- **Kids Helpline**
 - Free confidential 24-hour telephone and online counselling for young people between 5 and 18.
 - P: 1800 55 1800.
 - W: www.kidshelp.com.au
- **Suicide Call Back Service**
 - 24-hour national telephone counselling service to people 18 years and over and online services.
 - P: 1300 659 467.
 - W: www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- **Beyondblue**
 - 24-hour telephone support and links to local services.
 - P: 1300 22 4636.
 - W: www.beyondblue.org.au
- **e-headspace**
 - Telephone counselling for young people 12-25 years.
 - P: 1800 650 890.
 - W: www.eheadspace.org.au

Online Chat:

Sometimes people are too anxious to talk on the phone. An online chat is a good alternative.

- **Beyond Blue:**
 - <https://online.beyondblue.org.au/#/chat/start>
- **eheadspace** (ages 12-25):
 - www.eheadspace.org.au

Smartphone Applications:

- **Safety Plan to Cope with Suicidal Thoughts:**
 - <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/beyondnow-suicide-safety-plan/id1059270058>
- **Coping with Urges to Self-Harm:**
 - <https://au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps/calm-harm>

Bereavement:

- **StandBy Support**
 - Support for communities and individuals impacted by suicide:
<https://standbysupport.com.au>

This sheet is for information and education purposes only. Always seek professional and emergency support where risk is indicated. Put together by Karien Hill & Dr. Carina Chan (Researchers from La Trobe University).