



Suicide can affect anyone, even those who seem well supported

It's difficult to imagine someone you care about taking their own life. But many people around the world do, often without warning.

Their loved ones, colleagues and community members are left to grieve. Many feel a mix of complicated emotions: disbelief, sorrow, anger. Some, especially those closest to them, feel guilty, wondering if they should've known somehow and done something to stop it.

But no one can predict who might attempt or die by suicide. And no one is to blame when someone does. Many people who attempt suicide do so impulsively without warning.

Still, we can all do more to create supportive environments where people in despair know they're not alone. World Suicide Prevention Day is observed each year on the 10th of September to raise awareness and promote prevention efforts.

Who's at risk?

Suicide affects every region of the world, and people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances. It's linked to:

- Mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and alcohol or substance use disorders
- Major life stress factors, like financial, relationship and legal troubles
- Chronic medical conditions and pain
- Experiencing a disaster, violence, abuse, loss, or a sense of isolation
- Belonging to a group that faces discrimination, such as refugees, immigrants, people of colour or LGBTQ+ individuals
- Cultural or religious ideals
- Being in prison
- Family history of suicide



10 September

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**World Suicide
Prevention Day**

Yet many people who fall into one or more of these categories never attempt suicide, while others not on the list do. It's difficult to know who's at risk. It could be a colleague who seems happy and as if they're living their best life, a close friend who's always there to help others, or someone else. Stigma and taboo often keep people from asking for support, even when they need it most.

That's why it's so important to understand what suicide is, and how to support someone who may be thinking about it.

Show compassion

One of the most important steps is to talk more about mental health and wellbeing. Letting your loved ones know that you're a safe place for them to turn can go a long way in helping them feel connected and supported.

Being open about your own struggles can also help others feel more comfortable sharing theirs.

Know the warning signs

Listen closely to what your loved ones and others say, without passing judgment. If they talk about feeling worthless, wanting to die, having no reason to live, killing themselves or getting revenge, those are warning signs.

The way they behave can also signal suicidal thoughts, such as extreme mood swings, sleeping too much or too little, giving away valuables, isolating themselves or increasing their use of alcohol or drugs.

Offer support

If you notice these types of signs or just get a sense that they're struggling, talk to them. Ask how they're feeling and let them know that you're here to listen without judgment. It's also OK to ask gently if they're thinking about suicide. For tips on how to talk about wellbeing, read 'Opening up: Get a deeper conversation started' in this month's toolkit.

Depending on what they say (or don't say), let them know that you care about them and are concerned about their wellbeing.

For your own part, remember that you're not there to fix anything – you're there to be someone they can lean on so that they feel less alone and more supported.

If you're worried that they may be in despair or thinking about suicide, focus on how to help them feel supported while doing your best to keep them safe. For example, stay with them until you're confident that they're safe or with someone who can support them. If possible, remove substances or items that they might use to harm themselves.

Encourage them to get in touch with a medical or mental health provider who can help them stay safe and find the support they need.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, seek safety and get help immediately. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.

Sources:

Cleveland Clinic. [Suicide: What it is, signs, risk factors & prevention](#). 22 July 2024.

HealthDirect. [Suicide warning signs - support, at-risk groups, resources](#).

International Association for Suicide Prevention. [Individuals](#).

Mental Health UK. [Suicide](#).

World Health Organization. [Suicide](#). 25 March 2025.



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