

# Suicide

## Overview

**Suicide is the act of intentionally ending your life.**

If you're reading this because you have, or have had, thoughts about taking your life, it's important you ask someone for help. It's probably difficult for you to see at this time, but you're not alone and not beyond help.

Many people who've had suicidal thoughts say they were so overwhelmed by negative feelings they felt they had no other option. However, with support and treatment they were able to allow the negative feelings to pass.

## Getting help

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/suicide/getting-help/>

**If you're reading this because you're having suicidal thoughts, try to ask someone for help. It may be difficult at this time, but it's important to know you're not beyond help and you're not alone.**

Talking to someone can help you see beyond feelings of loneliness or despair and help you realise there are options.

There are people who want to talk to you and help. Try talking to a family member or friend about how you're feeling.

There are several telephone helplines you can call at any time of the day or night. You can speak to someone who understands how you're feeling and can help you through the immediate crisis.

## Helplines and support groups

We know it can be difficult to pick up the phone, but reach out to somebody and let them know how you are feeling.

- The [Samaritans](#)' 24-hour support service on 116 123 is available every day of the year. If you prefer to write down how you're feeling, or if you're worried about being overheard on the phone, you can email Samaritans at [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).
- [Childline](#) (0800 1111) runs a helpline for children and young people in the UK. Calls are free and the number won't show up on your phone bill.
- [PAPYRUS](#) (0800 068 41 41) is a voluntary organisation supporting teenagers and young adults who are feeling suicidal.

- [Depression Alliance](#) is a charity for people with depression. It doesn't have a helpline, but offers a wide range of useful resources and links to other relevant information.
- [Students Against Depression](#) is a website for students who are depressed, have a low mood or are having suicidal thoughts.
- [Bullying UK](#) is a website for both children and adults affected by bullying.

Read more about [getting help if you're feeling suicidal](#)

## Help for young men

Men may be more likely to avoid or ignore problems and many are reluctant to talk about their feelings or seek help when they need it.

[Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#) is an excellent resource for young men who are feeling unhappy. As well as their website, CALM also has a helpline (0800 58 58 58).

## Talking to someone you trust

If you don't want to speak to someone on a helpline, you could:

- Talk to a friend, family member or someone you trust as they may be able to help you calm down and find some breathing space
- Talk to someone you trust, such as a teacher, your GP, a mental healthcare professional or another healthcare professional, a minister, priest or other type of faith leader
- go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department and tell the staff how you are feeling
- contact [NHS 111](#)
- make an urgent appointment to see your GP

## Seeing your GP

Your GP can advise you about appropriate treatment if they think you have a mental health condition, such as [depression](#) or [anxiety](#).

Your GP may be able to help you with access to talking therapies. Talking therapies, such as [counselling](#) and [cognitive behavioural therapy \(CBT\)](#), are often used to help people who have suicidal thoughts and usually involve talking about your feelings with a professional.

## If you are reading this because you are concerned about someone else

If you're worried that someone you know may be considering suicide, try to encourage them to talk about how they are feeling. Listening is the best way to help. Try to avoid offering solutions and try not to judge.

If they've previously been diagnosed with a mental health condition, such as depression, you can speak to a member of their care team for help and advice.

Read more about [suicide warning signs](#) and [how you can help someone with suicidal thoughts](#).

**This guidance from Devon helps you to know what to say**

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/adultsocialcareandhealth/factsheet/mental-health/its-safe-to-talk-about-suicide/>

## Helping your child

If you are concerned your child may be feeling suicidal or is [self-harming](#), the following advice may help:

- notice when they seem upset, withdrawn or irritable
- encourage them to talk about their worries, listen to them and help them find their own solutions
- keep all medicines locked away, including painkillers such as paracetamol
- suggest your child talks to their GP or a counsellor about how they feel

Read more about:

- [warning signs of anxiety or depression in children](#)
- [talking to your teenager](#)
- [healthtalk.org: parents' and carers' experiences of self-harm](http://healthtalk.org: parents' and carers' experiences of self-harm)

**Locally there is a crowdfunding initiative to train 625 Suicide First Aiders across Devon and Torbay**

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More details can be found here: <https://suicide-safer-communities.org/>

## Why some people take their life

There's no single reason why someone may try to take their life, but certain things can increase the risk.

A person may be more likely to have suicidal thoughts if they have a mental health condition, such as [depression](#), [bipolar disorder](#) or [schizophrenia](#). Misusing alcohol or drugs and having poor job security can also make a person more vulnerable.

It's not always possible to prevent suicidal thoughts, but keeping your mind healthy with regular exercise, healthy eating and maintaining friendships can help you cope better with stressful or upsetting situations.

Read more about the [causes of suicide](#) and [preventing suicide](#).

## Self-harm

Many people who self-harm don't want to kill themselves. Self-harming can be a kind of "survival strategy", providing a person with a way of coping with overwhelming emotions.

However, self-harming is usually a sign that a person needs immediate help and support.

Read about [self-harm](#) for more information and advice.

### How common is suicide?

During 2012, there were 5,981 suicides in the UK, but the number of attempted suicides is much higher.

Suicide occurs in people of all ages, including children, but adults in middle- and late-middle age have the highest suicide rate.

## Myths about suicide

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/what-speak-us-about/signs-you-may-be-struggling-cope/myths-about-suicide>

Understanding the facts about suicide will help you identify the signs if someone close to you is finding it hard to cope.

**Myth:** You have to be mentally ill to think about suicide.

**Fact:** Most people have thought of suicide from time to time and not all people who die by suicide have mental health problems at the time of death. However, many people who kill themselves do suffer with their mental health, typically to a serious degree. Sometimes it's known about before the person's death and sometimes not.

**Myth:** People who talk about suicide aren't serious and won't go through with it.

**Fact:** People who kill themselves have often told someone that they do not feel life is worth living or that they have no future. Some may have actually said they want to die. While it's possible that someone might talk about suicide as a way of getting the attention they need, it's vitally important to take anybody who talks about feeling suicidal seriously.

The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die; they do not want to live the life they have.

**Myth:** Once a person has made a serious suicide attempt, that person is unlikely to make another.

**Fact:** People who have tried to end their lives before are significantly more likely to eventually die by suicide than the rest of the population.

**Myth:** If a person is serious about killing themselves then there is nothing you can do.

**Fact:** Often, feeling actively suicidal is temporary, even if someone has been feeling low, anxious or struggling to cope for a long period of time. This is why getting the right kind of support at the right time is so important.

**Myth:** Talking about suicide is a bad idea as it may give someone the idea to try it.

**Fact:** Suicide can be a taboo topic in society. Often, people feeling suicidal don't want to worry or burden anyone with how they feel and so they don't discuss it. By asking directly about suicide you give them permission to tell you how they feel. People who have felt suicidal will often say what a huge relief it is to be able to talk about what their experiencing. Once someone starts talking they've got a better chance of discovering other options to suicide.

**Myth:** Most suicides happen in the winter months.

**Fact:** Suicide is more common in the spring and summer months.

**Myth:** People who threaten suicide are just attention seeking and shouldn't be taken seriously.

**Fact:** People who threaten suicide should always be taken seriously. It may well be that they want attention in the sense of calling out for help, and giving them this attention may save their life.

**Myth:** People who are suicidal want to die.

**Fact:** The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die; they do not want to live the life they have. The distinction may seem small but is in fact very important and is why talking through other options at the right time is so vital.