

Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal Ideation describes a range of thoughts and behaviors about death and dying (i.e., suicidal thoughts, suicidal intent, suicide plan, suicide attempt)

Myth: Suicidal talk is a “cry for help” or attention

Fact: Threats of suicide should always be taken seriously and responded to calmly and thoughtfully

Myth: Talking about suicide increases risk of an attempt

Fact: This is widely disproven in the research. Talking openly makes someone feel more understood and supported with tough feelings.

Risk Factors:

- History of mental health challenges
- Acute stressors (i.e., bullying, fighting, recent loss)
- Alcohol/ substance use disorders
- Struggling with sexual orientation
- Family history

Protective Factors:

- Open discussions about mental health challenges and suicide
- Problem-solving skills
- Strong connections with family and/or friends
- Restricted access to means
- Cultural/ religious beliefs
- Clinical Intervention

Warning Signs:

- Talking about wanting to die or kill themselves
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Withdrawing/isolating from others
- Feeling stuck or trapped
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Risky behavior

How to Help Someone:

- Take their suicidal thoughts and behaviors seriously
- Express empathy and validate their feelings
- Talk openly about their suicidal thoughts and behaviors
- Restrict means (e.g., guns, sharps, medication, etc.)
- Seek professional support



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What can I do at home:

- **Validate their feelings** *without judgement or correction.* It is easy for us to say “Things will be okay,” but that can make children feel misunderstood or invalidated. Instead, “It sounds like you’re feeling like things won’t change” or “That sounds really tough”
- **Talk openly about suicidal ideation.** It is important that youth feel safe discussing these uncomfortable feelings and thoughts without fear of overreaction or guilt.
- **Prioritize positive time.** Take time out of your day to engage in fun activities together or just hang out and talk about other things. Show and let them know how important they are to you.

Effective Treatments for suicidal ideation:

- **Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT):** Work with children/ adolescents to change unhelpful thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT):** Type of CBT that incorporate mindfulness and was created for those at-risk of suicide. Teaches skills for distress tolerance, emotion regulation, mindfulness, and interpersonal effectiveness.. Moves people toward living a life that feels meaningful and worth living.
- **Medication:** May help in conjunction with psychotherapy (always consult your doctor before starting medication)

If you are worried about your or someone else’s safety, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

Safety Plan

Reason(s) for Living:

- ❖
- ❖
- ❖

Warning Signs or triggers:

- ❖
- ❖
- ❖

Coping Skills I can use by myself:

- ❖
- ❖
- ❖

Social Coping Skills:

- ❖
- ❖
- ❖

People I trust and will contact:

- ❖
- ❖
- ❖

If you continue to feel unsafe and feel you may harm or kill yourself, dial 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

SUICIDE CRISIS PHONE LINES 24/7

NATIONAL SUICIDE HOTLINE: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)