

RISK FACTORS

Suicidal thoughts and feelings can affect anyone at any time. However, there are some things that happen that can make a young person more at-risk of taking their own life. This is by no means a definitive list and it can be helpful to keep an eye out for any experience a young person has that leaves them feel rejected, ashamed, a burden to others, or overwhelmed emotionally:

- Bullying - IRL or online
- Discrimination
- Suicide of someone known to them- like a friend or peer, or family member
- A life changing event, like a breakup, family breakdown, or academic disappointment
- Self-harm
- Loss of a loved one
- Experiencing violence or abuse
- Discrimination, rejection or hostility due to sexual or gender identity
- Childhood illness or surgery.
- Childhood sexual or physical abuse.
- Family substance abuse.
- Negative body image perceptions.
- Lack of impulse control
- Childhood trauma
- Neglect
- Lack of strong family attachment

INVITATIONS

When someone is thinking about suicide they often show this to others in a non-direct way. It's as if they want to communicate what is going on for them, what they are feeling and thinking, and that suicide has become a real option for them, but don't know how to do it directly. We can see this as a non-direct invitation to directly ask what is really going on. Look out for:

- Changes in behaviour- loss of interest in things they used to enjoy, isolating themselves more than usual, withdrawing from people and activities they would usually engage with, giving away possessions*.
- Physical changes - losing interest in their appearance, losing weight, not sleeping, or sleeping more than usual.
- Expressing negative thoughts and feelings, like feeling hopeless, a waste of space, not seeing any point in things, blaming themselves for things that have gone wrong, overall sadness and a general sense of exhaustion.
- Words/language being used - "I can't take it anymore", "Everyone would be better off without me". Hints they're thinking about suicide by saying things like "I'd like to go to sleep and never wake up" or "I wish I wasn't here"
- Talking about death or suicide (even in a joking way) Posting about death, dying, suicide, self-harm, 'kms', and 'unalive myself' etc., on social media
- Increased drug or alcohol use or other risky behaviours
- Self-harming

*It's also worth remembering that if someone has been struggling for a while and suicide has begun to feel like an option because it will be an end to the pain, then the person can seem brighter than they have in a while. They can start to show an uncharacteristic lifting of their mood.

Some of these changes can appear to be the sorts of things that young people do as a normal part of growing up, and are therefore easy to put down to that, when in fact they may be cause for real concern. The most important thing to do to ascertain if someone is struggling with thoughts of suicide is to ask, and then work together to keep them safe.



Head to care.thecalmzone.net for all the info you need to be there for a young person