



## Supporting Young People to Take Charge of Their Mental Health

### Suicide

#### What is suicide?

Suicide is when someone acts to take their own life. Sometimes when a person attempts suicide they do not succeed, but the act damages their body to the extent they will be unable to make a full recovery.

Suicide may feel like the only option for those who take their own lives or attempt to do so, but the aftermath can be incredibly traumatic for their loved ones, particularly for whoever finds their body. Suicide is overwhelming for those left behind. It could be that of all the different ways we can die, suicide is the most difficult to come to terms with for loved ones. If we think about making this choice, we must remember that we won't be around to help our families deal with their grief or answer all the difficult questions suicide brings up for them.

When someone takes their own life they may feel no one can help them, when the truth is the act of suicide prevents anyone from doing so forever. When someone takes their own life, there is no coming back from it, no hope that things can change for the better, no second opportunities at life – death is final.

#### What are suicidal thoughts?

Many young people will feel suicidal during their lives. Often it is a reaction to things going on in our lives or because we are depressed and feel hopeless. Some will end up in hospital due to self-harming and injuring behaviours, and many more will make suicide attempts that fail, but never tell anyone about it. Sadly, a number will go on to take their own lives – about 1600 young people under the age of 35 will die through suicide each year in the UK.

Painful emotions and events in our lives can begin to overwhelm us, leading to desperation at the thought of carrying on and struggling through. We might consider that we can make the choice to escape it all, questioning what would it be like if we weren't here anymore and didn't have to feel like this, what if we were dead?. These types of thoughts are very common, and don't make us a bad or messed-up person. But they can become serious if they become a fixation, or if we are suffering from depression, anxiety or other mental health issues. Decisions reached about attempting suicide when in these frames of minds can be impossible to come back from because we may not be thinking clearly (even if we think we are at the time).

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Some of the key warning signs to look out for when we are feeling suicidal are:

- feeling overwhelming hopeless
- feeling like no one could possibly understand or help
- feeling agitated, moody and anxious
- losing any interest in the things we once enjoyed doing
- using self-harming techniques as coping strategies – taking risks with our personal safety
- overwhelming and persistent thoughts of ending our lives
- suicidal ideation – when we become fixated with thoughts of suicide and planning our own death
- researching suicide methods
- finding ourselves making plans for how we could kill ourselves
- thinking about notes or messages we might like to leave behind for loved ones
- getting our lives 'in order' – sorting through personal documents and emails and tying up loose strings with friends, perhaps planning final times we might see our loved ones in our heads

### Why might we become suicidal?

Suicidal thoughts and ideation can occur in us for several reasons:

- we are being bullied
- someone we love has died
- we've had a relationship breakdown
- not getting exam results we hoped for and feeling like we've failed
- being confused about our sexuality
- being abused
- shame at something we've done
- feeling like we can't live up to expectations
- problems at home such as parents divorcing or witnessing domestic violence
- suffering from depression
- suffering with anxiety issues
- having eating issues or disorders
- feeling rejected by those we love
- something physical is happening to affect our emotional state, such as illness, dependency on drugs/alcohol, medication causing side-effects or having an underactive pituitary gland
- suffering other mental health issues such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder
- having lost a loved one to suicide
- genetic factors giving us a higher risk of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts

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### Getting help

- **Tell someone** – it can be anyone from a parent, friend, teacher, GP, extended family member or college lecturer. If you are finding it hard to contemplate doing this face-to-face send a letter, email or text letting them know. It can be hard to reach out when we are feeling so low, but try to hold on to the fact that your loved ones WILL want to help you.
- **If we reach suicidal crisis** where our desire to make an attempt on our life is overwhelming, we **MUST** tell somebody – we need help when we feel this out of control as it may be beyond our powers to stop it on our own.
- **Try to be around people** - avoid being alone where feelings can take over – staying safe is so important when we feel suicidal.
- **Avoid taking drugs or drinking alcohol** - when in this frame of mind it can lead to lowered inhibitions and acting on our thoughts and plans impulsively

Our GP might feel we would benefit from a referral to the local CAMHS/CMHT teams and talking therapies to work through the issues at the root of our suicidal thoughts – whilst it can be hard to talk to people we don't know about our issues it can help a lot if we give it a chance. We must try to find the strength to accept and engage with all help we are given when at our lowest points as this is a way out to feeling better and avoiding suicidal crisis in the future.

### How can No5 help?

Learning to effectively deal with the issues at the root of suicidal ideation and behaviours is important, as not dealt with it can cause us serious injury or death, so it is important to talk to somebody about it if things are becoming too much to handle. Here at No5 we offer free, impartial and confidential support to young people aged 11-25. Come and talk to us – counselling is about listening to, and helping YOU to work through your problems and find more effective ways of dealing with life's issues, in a caring, trusting environment.

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