

Let's talk about
suicide.

World Suicide Prevention Day

10TH SEPTEMBER 2021

CHAMPION
HEALTH

the
Greencore
way

Let's talk about suicide.

The World Health Organization estimates that over 800,000 people take their own life each year – that's one person every 40 seconds. In the UK alone, there are on average 109 deaths by suicide per week.

Despite the progress we've made around normalising mental health, suicide remains a misunderstood and taboo topic. This stigma persists throughout our communities and wider society, despite many of us being touched by suicide in some way.

It's time this changed.

109 people die by suicide each week in the UK (ONS, 2020)

The theme of World Suicide Prevention Day this year is "Creating Hope Through Action". This reinforces that our actions, no matter how big or small, can provide hope to those who are struggling. It's also a reminder that we are all key players in suicide prevention, as a member of society, as a parent, as a colleague or as a friend. Through action, we can all make a difference.

We can all play a role in supporting those experiencing a suicidal crisis or those bereaved by suicide.

Remember, you are not facing this alone. There are people who will listen and support you.

It's not weak to speak

Need help now?

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or feel you can't keep yourself safe, try the following steps:

Speak to someone you trust about how you are feeling

1

Contact your GP, dial 111 or contact the helplines below

2

Call 999 if you are in immediate danger

3

QUICKEST WAY TO GET HELP

Additional support is also available:



📞 0800 068 4141
📍 Helpline for under 35s
🌐 www.papyrus-uk.org

SAMARITANS

📞 116 123
📍 24/7 helpline
🌐 www.samaritans.org

CALM

📞 0800 58 58 58
📍 Helpline for men
🌐 www.thecalmzone.net

shout
85258

📞 Text 85258
📍 24/7 text service
🌐 www.giveusashout.org

1 in 5 adults in the UK have experienced suicidal thoughts.

(McManus et al., 2016)

75% of people who die by suicide in the UK are male

(ONS, 2020)

Men aged 45 to 49 have the highest suicide rate in the UK

(Samaritans, 2019)

Understanding Suicide.

Suicide is complex. There is no one reason why an individual may die by suicide, or experience suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

For example, a person may feel suicidal due to intense feelings of isolation, hopelessness and the belief the world would be better without them. They may not want to die, but are instead finding it impossible to live.

This complexity makes it difficult to predict who may be affected by suicide and what warning signs to look out for. There are, however, common experiences you might notice in the way a person is communicating or behaving.

Communication:

- > **Talking about dying or ending their life:**
"I'd be better off dead" "I wish I hadn't been born"
- > **Talking about feeling hopeless or lacking purpose:**
"There's no way out" "What's the point?"
- > **Talking about being a burden to others:**
"Everyone would be better off without me"

Behaviour:

- > Excessive alcohol or drug use
- > Unusual changes in behaviour
- > Severe shortage of sleep
- > Organising personal affairs
- > Sudden social withdrawal
- > Saying goodbye to loved ones

Myth

"Asking if someone is suicidal will put the idea into their head"

Truth

It may seem counterintuitive, but asking someone directly about suicidal thoughts can be protective. It gives them permission to talk about how they are feeling, ensuring they feel listened to, validated and like somebody cares for them. Asking about suicide saves lives.

Myth

"If someone is suicidal, they're not really going to do it - it's just a cry for help"

Truth

It's important to always take someone who's experiencing suicidal thoughts seriously. They may not want to die, but anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts is likely to be struggling and should be given access to the help and support they need.

Myths about Suicide.

Myth

"You can only experience suicidal thoughts if you have a mental health problem"

Truth

Anybody can experience suicidal thoughts. Figures show that 1 in 5 adults have contemplated suicide at one point in their life. This means that suicidal thoughts should always be considered, asked about and not dismissed based on someone's mental health history.

Here are some of the common myths and misconceptions we regularly hear about suicide. It's important to understand the truth, so we can better support someone who is struggling or in crisis.

Myth

"Everybody who is suicidal wants to die"

Truth

Not everybody who is suicidal wants to die, but rather they don't want to live the life they have. This is an incredibly important distinction to make, as it gives hope that there are alternatives to suicide and things can (and will) get better.

Myth

"There's nothing you can do to prevent someone from taking their own life"

Truth

Suicide can be preventable when the right support is offered. Knowing the warning signs and how to support someone will greatly reduce the risk of them taking their own life. You have the potential to make a difference, no matter how small

Supporting Others in Crisis

Once we spot the warning signs, it can be daunting to know what to say or do next. That's why we have developed the CLASS approach: a 5-step guide to supporting someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Connect, Listen, Assess, Support, Signpost

Connect

Connect with the person you are concerned about. Make time to ask how they're doing and show empathy, care and concern. For ideas on what you could say, see the next page.

Listen

Allow them time to talk things through and listen to what's being said. Your job is not to solve the problem or offer advice, but to listen and show you care.

Facilitate the conversation rather than leading it, and try not to minimise their feelings by comparing their experiences to others.

Assess

When a person is feeling suicidal, we need to assess the situation carefully.

Establish if they have any intentions or have made any plans or preparations to end their life. Encourage them to think of the things that make life worth living (these are protective factors).

Support

Make it clear that you're there to help and they are not a burden to you. Explore what support they already have and ways they can keep themselves safe.

Remember, finding a way forward should always be collaborative.

Signpost

Connect them with services so they can access timely support. Main points of contact include their GP, NHS 111 (if out of hours) and confidential helplines (see "Need Help Now?").

Make a plan together about the actions they are going to take.

If they have made plans or preparations and feel they can't keep themselves safe:

- 1 Let them know you are concerned for their safety
- 2 Encourage them to call 999, or call 999 on their behalf
- 3 Continue talking to them until the ambulance arrives

Spotlight on: “Connect”

While every step in the CLASS approach is important, we want to draw specific attention to the “C”: Connect. Connecting with someone, whether they’re a colleague, friend or even a stranger, to discuss suicide will undoubtedly feel daunting.

And despite your best intentions, it can sometimes be challenging to find out how that person is really feeling. They may be unfamiliar with talking about their mental health, concerned about what might happen if they open up or even ashamed of their feelings.

To navigate this conversation, try the following:

The power of small talk

After an incredibly tough year, much of it spent in lockdown, many of us have not needed to utilise the power of small talk for a long time. But, as Samaritans reminded us in a recent campaign, we already have the skills to start a conversation with a stranger or friend that needs help.

If something doesn’t feel right, a little small talk and a simple question, like “Hello, what’s the time?”, can be all it takes to interrupt someone’s suicidal thoughts. If you feel something isn’t quite right and you think someone might need help, trust your instincts and start a conversation. You could save a life.

Learn more about Samaritans’
Small Talk Saves Lives campaign [↗](#)

What do I say?

Knowing what to say and how to say it can be the hardest part of talking to someone about suicide. Here are some phrases that might come in use.

I’ve noticed you’ve not been yourself. Is everything okay?

I’m glad you’ve told me – it must have been difficult going through it on your own.

These feelings are only temporary – we can get through this moment together.

Now might not be a good time to make a big decision. Let’s take a step back and consider the other options.

Have you thought about... (e.g. speaking to the Samaritans)? Should we make a plan together?

Asking twice

It’s not always obvious when people are feeling suicidal, so it’s important that you’re able to look beyond a “Yes, I’m fine” response.

If someone says they’re fine, they might not be.

If you’re given this response, simply try asking again.

Asking “How are you really?” can make all the difference.

About confidentiality

When someone shares something with us, we should treat it with the strictest confidence.

However, confidentiality has its limits, and when a person is at risk of harming themselves, the limits of confidentiality are reached.

In this situation, we should do everything we can to keep them safe, including informing a relevant person or calling 999. This ensures they will get access to timely and appropriate help.



The language of suicide

The way we talk and the words we use has a huge impact on the way we perceive the world. So, when talking about suicide, language really does matter.

For example, you should avoid the phrase “commit suicide” because this relates to an era when suicide was a crime.

Similarly, avoid using the words “successful” or “unsuccessful” as this connotes an achievement of something positive, despite the tragic outcomes. We’ve added alternatives into the table below.

SAY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

✓ Died by suicide

✗ Committed suicide

✓ Suicide death

✗ Successful attempt

✓ Suicide attempt

✗ Unsuccessful attempt

✓ Person living with suicidal thoughts or behavior

✗ Suicide ideator or attempter

✓ Suicide

✗ Completed suicide

Keeping our
people *safe*

Workplace health
that makes a difference.

CHAMPION
HEALTH

the
Greencore
way

