

Every 40 seconds: Let's make suicide something we discuss – and prevent



In the time it takes to brush your teeth in the morning, a person has died by suicide. In the time it takes to fill a tea kettle or coffee pot, another has died. It's a startling statistic. Every 40 seconds throughout the world, someone's life ends this way.¹ For every person who dies, about 20 survive a suicide attempt.²

Suicide is a global health issue. But it's not often discussed openly. Silence, or even hushed tones, can add to the stigma. That can cause feelings of shame for people who have survived a suicide attempt or lost someone to suicide. Instead, it's important to show others that we care. We will listen without judgement and will help them get support when they need it.

Wondering what you should say or do if you're worried about someone? Want to show support in your community? Here are some ideas for getting started.

Know the warning signs

When someone is considering taking their life by suicide, they might threaten to do it and search for methods and means. They might say things like, "No one will miss me when I'm gone." They might say goodbye to family and friends and give away things they care about.⁴ You may also see extreme mood swings, increased anxiety or increased anger or rage.^{5,6}

There are some risk factors to know as well:⁴

- Experiencing depression or a substance use disorder
- Having survived a previous suicide attempt
- Being socially isolated
- Suffering from ongoing illness or pain
- Having experienced abuse, trauma, war, violence or discrimination
- Experiencing severe distress like a break-up or loss of a loved one



Suicide is the **fourth-leading cause** of death for people aged 12-29.²

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1 in 100

people die by suicide.³

**Know someone
who's been more
isolated lately?**

Check in on them.

The pandemic made keeping up with relationships harder. Reaching out can make a big difference.

Look for ways to help in your community

Consider volunteering at a suicide prevention organisation. They might need people to answer phones. You might also be able to offer support in other ways, such as spreading awareness at community events. Look for other organisations that may help at-risk people as well. Youth organisations, mentoring opportunities and recovery programmes may be good places to contact.

Be prepared for a tough conversation

If you think someone is considering suicide, ask them. Asking someone directly, "Have you thought about hurting or killing yourself?" will not put the idea into their head. It's important to talk and listen compassionately, without judgement. Suicide is preventable.^{4,6} Don't lecture them about the value of life, and don't tell them whether suicide is right or wrong.⁶ Instead, listen. You can ask questions if needed, but be sure not to interrupt.⁶

With more awareness and efforts to prevent suicide, we won't have to lose a person every 40 seconds. Take a moment to consider what you could do to make a positive change.

Together, we can make a difference.

Get professional help

If the person asks you to keep it a secret, explain why it's important to get the care they need right away. While talking to you may be helpful for them, you don't have to do it all on your own. Encourage the person you're speaking with to seek professional support. They could talk to a doctor or mental health professional.⁴ If you're worried they're in danger, don't leave them alone. Seek help from a crisis line or emergency services, and remove any methods that could be used to cause harm.^{4,6}



Scan this code to find more information about suicide prevention at livewell.optum.com. Use your company access code to get started.



1. World Health Organization (WHO). Suicide: One person dies every 40 seconds. [who.int/news/item/09-09-2019-suicide-one-person-dies-every-40-seconds](https://www.who.int/news/item/09-09-2019-suicide-one-person-dies-every-40-seconds). September 9, 2019. Accessed June 28, 2022.

2. WHO. Suicide prevention. [who.int/health-topics/suicide#tab=tab_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/suicide#tab=tab_1). Accessed 28 June 2022.

3. WHO. One in 100 deaths is by suicide. [who.int/news/item/17-06-2021-one-in-100-deaths-is-by-suicide](https://www.who.int/news/item/17-06-2021-one-in-100-deaths-is-by-suicide). June 17, 2021. Accessed 28 June 2022.

4. WHO. Do you know someone who may be considering suicide? cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/mental-health/depression/suicide-04-handouts-depression.pdf?sfvrsn=7c5eaac4_2. Accessed 28 June 2022.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. #BeThere to help prevent suicide. [cdc.gov/injury/features/be-there-prevent-suicide/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/injury/features/be-there-prevent-suicide/index.html). Last reviewed February 24, 2022. Accessed 28 June 2022.

6. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Help someone else. suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/. Accessed 28 June 2022.

This programme should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest accident & emergency department.

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