

Knowing the warning signs that someone is having trouble coping is important. For some people, this could result in them getting the help they need.

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SUICIDE

For some people, the pressures, worries and stressful or painful events of life become so huge that they feel like they can't go on living.

Knowing the warning signs that someone, such as a friend, family member or a classmate is having trouble coping is important. For some people, this could result in them getting the help they need.

Signs that might tell you a friend or family member isn't coping include:

- Depression
- Previous suicide attempts, thinking about death all the time or talking about suicidal thoughts
- Giving away valuable personal possessions
- Problems with eating (too much or too little)
- Problems with sleeping (too much or too little)
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Personality changes such as outbursts of anger and out of control behaviour
- Regular bad temper or unexplained crying
- A sudden improvement in mood following warning signs of suicide such as depression - this might be an indication that the person has made the final decision to commit suicide
- They tell you or write to you about their plan to commit suicide – lots of people who end up committing suicide tell someone that they intended to kill themselves

- No interest in the future or normal activities such as school and hobbies
- Behavioural problems and substance abuse

"I had been reading an article about the warning signs and risk factors for suicide. A friend of mine had been acting really different lately and as I read each of the warning signs, I realised that my friend seemed to have a lot of them. At the bottom of the article was a suggestion to ring Kids Help Line (call 1800 55 1800). So I did. They said that I should tell a parent or teacher and that they would help me to do that if necessary. So I told my parents that I was worried about my friend and showed them the article. In the end, help was obtained with a good outcome"

It's not always easy to see the signs in a friend or relative that they're not coping. Sometimes there are no warning signs at all as their appearance and personality appear 'normal'. Remember that not all suicides can be prevented, so you shouldn't feel guilty if you weren't able to help.

Now that you're more aware of the warning signs, check out the fact sheet (number 8) on '**What to do if someone you know is having trouble coping**'.

There's also heaps of false information around about youth suicide that can make it difficult for young people who are having trouble coping to get the help they need.

See over the page for some common myths about suicide.



Common myths about suicide include:

- Suicidal behaviour is manipulative and should be ignored or even punished**
All suicidal behaviour is serious. It shows that the person isn't coping and may need help. The response of family and friends is very important to their recovery.
- People who talk about their suicidal intentions just want attention**
Talking about suicidal intentions should be treated seriously, especially if they appear to have a plan.
- If you are worried about a friend or a family member and you ask them if they intend to commit suicide it will "put the idea into their head"**
This is a common mistake. In reality, if you are at the point where you feel like you need to talk to that friend/family member about suicide, they are already exhibiting worrying and perhaps suicidal behaviour. Talking with them about it actually lets them know you are taking their pain seriously.
- A friend or family member tells you of their intention to commit suicide and you agree to keep it secret**
It's important that help is sought sooner rather than later. It's more important for your friend or relative to be safe and getting them help than trying to deal with it on your own.
- People who attempt suicide and survive will never do it again**
If a young person who has attempted suicide does not get the help they need following their attempt, or the crisis in their lives continues, they are at risk of attempting suicide again in the future.

- If someone wants to commit suicide, nothing will stop it happening i.e. once a person is suicidal, they will be that way forever**
With the right help a young person who has attempted suicide can go on to lead a normal life.
- A sudden improvement in the mood of someone you suspect is suicidal means the crisis is over**
In actual fact this could be an indication that the young person has made the final decision to complete suicide and feels better because of this.
- Only mentally ill or clinically depressed people attempt suicide**
Yes, a lot of people who commit suicide have some form of mental illness, but many people go through tough times that leave them feeling like they can't cope. A more accurate sign is feelings of hopelessness or despair.
- Suicide is hereditary**
Even though the rate of suicide is sometimes higher within families, this has more to do with family life than genetics.
- The only people who can help someone who is suicidal are mental health professionals**
The support of friends and family members is really important when a young person is coping with crisis. Often just having someone to talk to about their problems is enough.
- Most suicidal people never seek help for their problems**
A lot of young people who commit suicide seek help before their death. They may not be able to communicate their problems directly, but often show clear indications that they aren't coping.

