



Suicide Awareness

Some of the most frequently asked questions...

Why do people attempt suicide?

There are various reasons why a person might consider committing suicide. The most common is emotional suffering or pain.

Individuals considering suicide have often reached a point where they feel there are no other viable solutions to the problems they face; or solutions that do exist seem unattainable.

Why can't those who feel this way talk to someone?

Suicide is seen by society as a taboo subject. It is perceived as a result of being mentally unstable. A suicidal person may then feel that expressing their feelings will lead to accusations of being unbalanced or selfish and therefore will not have the courage to speak up and ask for help.

Are all suicidal people depressed?

Those considering suicide are often deeply distressed and the vast majority are depressed. This depression is frequently caused by negative circumstances or incidents in a person's life. Depression can also be a symptom of a diagnosed mental health problem. Sometimes the depression arises as a combination of both.

Is it dangerous to talk to someone about suicide?

Talking to someone about suicidal feelings may reduce their immediate distress. If you suspect that someone has reached this point, it can be a huge relief to them to know you are aware of how they feel. It can break the silence for them when they feel unable to communicate their emotions themselves, and may allow them to talk openly and consider choices and options open to them.

What kind of things make someone suicidal?

There is no clear answer... it depends on an individual's circumstances, coping skills and support. We all deal with trauma and stress in different ways.

How do you know if someone is considering suicide?

It is recognised that most, but not all of those who have committed suicide have left signs of how they were feeling. A warning sign is not always a guarantee that someone is suicidal, but should alert others that something might be wrong and the person needs attention.

Some signs of concern may be:

- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Signs of sadness, hopelessness and irritability
- Making negative remarks about themselves
- Talking or writing about suicide
- Putting their affairs in order
- Giving away personal items
- A sudden change from extreme depression to appearing to cope and being calm.

These signs are not definitive, but are possibly some of the signs displayed by someone who is suicidal. Others may show no sign of their pain at all. The only way to address our concerns is to ask.

Some myths about suicide

Fiction - Suicidal behaviour is a sign of mental illness.

Fact - Suicidal behaviour indicates deep unhappiness and a high level of hopelessness, but not necessarily mental illness.

Fiction - Suicide occurs in certain groups only - rich/poor, young/old.

Fact - Suicide occurs in all groups in society.

Fiction - You are either the suicidal type or not.

Fact - It could happen to anyone.

Fiction - Those who talk about it are least likely to attempt it.

Fact - Most people who have died by suicide have talked to others about it in recent past.

What can I do if I think or know that someone is suicidal?

- Try to listen to how they feel, no matter how painful the words are to hear.
- Take them seriously.
- Offer your support.
- Encourage them to seek further help, i.e. a doctor, minister, counsellor, family member or friend.
- If someone appears acutely suicidal and unable to talk, it may be necessary to seek immediate help through hospital casualty.
- If you find yourself in a difficult situation and need immediate help or advice, contact one of the 24 hour help-lines such as the Samaritans.

For further guidance and advice please contact:

The Samaritans

Belfast Branch (028) 9066 4422
24 hour help-line 084 5790 9090

PCI Counselling

Board of Social Witness
Church House, Belfast BT1 6DW
Tel: (028) 9261 0586
Email: bsw@presbyterianireland.org
Online: www.presbyterianireland.org/bsw