

## Suicide Ideation



Suicide ideation is the abstract thought of ending your life or believing that other people maybe better off without you. It is important to remember that a person expressing suicide ideation does not necessarily go on to complete suicide.

***If you believe a person to be in immediate danger and/or someone has hurt themselves and you think their injuries are life-threatening, call an ambulance on 999. You can do this whether you are with them in person or not. You will need to be able to give a location.***

### Why do young people experience suicide ideation?

- It is quite natural for young people to become stressed or anxious about things such as exams or moving school. However, there may be significant risk factors that present themselves or that a young person has experienced in the past which may trigger suicide ideation.
- Previous self-harm, suicidal thoughts or suicide attempt
- Substance use
- Evidence of mental health problems, especially depression, psychosis, post-traumatic stress disorder or eating disorder
- History of experiencing physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Loss or bereavement – could include loss of relationships or social status (anniversaries can be significant)

### What are the possible signs of suicide ideation?

Signs of depression in children and teenagers can include:

- persistent low-mood or lack of motivation
- not enjoying things, they used to like doing
- becoming withdrawn and spending less time with friends and family
- experiencing low self-esteem or feeling like they are 'worthless'
- feeling tearful or upset regularly
- changes in eating or sleeping habits.
- becoming socially withdrawn and avoiding spending times with friends or family
- feeling nervous or 'on edge' a lot of the time
- suffering panic attacks

### How can you support someone experiencing suicide ideation?

It is important not to describe the young person's thoughts as:

- selfish
- stupid
- cowardly or weak
- a choice
- a sin (for example, tell that person he/she is going to hell)
- Instead start up a conversation. You are not putting that person at greater risk by asking if they want to talk about their worries. In fact a short conversation could be the difference between life and death

### How to start a conversation?

Could you use the following to help start a conversation?

- "I've noticed that you haven't been yourself lately, is everything ok with you?"
- "I'm worried about you. I'm wondering if we can talk about what's troubling you?"
- "You've seemed really (down/sad/angry/unhappy) lately. I'm worried that you might be thinking of hurting yourself or suicide. Can we talk about this?"
- As with any safeguarding disclosure you cannot promise secrecy. It might be that the young person you have concerns about does not want to talk with you, always consider who that young person's trusted adult might be and involve them whenever possible.

### 'WAIT'

'WAIT' is one good way to remember how you can support another person who maybe suicidal. WAIT stands for:

- W** – Watch out for signs of distress and uncharacteristic behaviour e.g. social withdrawal, excessive quietness, irritability, uncharacteristic outburst, talking about death or suicide
- A** – Ask "are you having suicidal thoughts?" Asking about suicide does not encourage it, nor does it lead a person to start thinking about it; in fact it may help prevent it, and can start a potentially life-saving conversation.
- I** – It will pass; assure them that, with help, their suicidal feelings will pass with time.
- T** – Talk to others – encourage them to seek help from a GP or health professional.