



Suicide  
Prevention  
Pathways

# TALK SUICIDE

## Suicide – An Overview

### The Facts

Suicide is a leading public health problem with widespread individual, family and community ramifications. The terrible waste of human potential extends beyond the loss of individual life, to the psychological and emotional effects on bereaved families and individuals, some of whose grief is made more complicated by the suddenness of the death.

Recent suicide data in Australia shows that in 2020, 3,139 lives were lost to suicide, averaging over 9 deaths per day. Alarming, it is estimated that there are more than 65,000 attempts each year and more than 500,000 have attempted suicide at some time in their life. Sadly, we are facing a 'whole of society' issue that affects not just the mentally ill, the weak or the disadvantaged – it can affect any one of us & often does, either directly or indirectly at some point in our lives.

### Why Suicide?

It can be difficult to understand how and why someone would consider suicide an option unless we have walked in those shoes ourselves. This is because Suicide is individual in that the reasons one person may consider suicide an option will be entirely different from another.

We have to remember that no one is immune to either direct or indirect effects of suicide. Though you may at this very point

in your life think to yourself that you would never consider suicide an option, or it will never happen to anyone close to you – the reality is that there are no guarantees and it can happen to any one of us.

### Common Characteristics

The factors associated with suicide are varied and unique to every individual. Predicting who will take their life is extremely difficult, even for experienced professionals.

Common theories propose that there are several common characteristics of suicide including unbearable psychological pain, a sense of isolation, and the perception that death is the only solution. These are accompanied by negative emotions such as shame, guilt and sadness. Other factors that have been associated with suicide include trauma, loss and chronic pain. In addition to this, some may suffer from depression, anxiety or other mental illness, which exacerbates the issue.

At the opposite end of the spectrum lay protective factors made up of individual, social and environmental elements such as ability to cope, and heritage or culture which may make an individual less likely to consider suicide.

## Common Views

Suicide & suicidality have long been linked to negative judgments. Defining suicide and suicidal thoughts as immoral or illegal or even as an illness is an alienating and judgmental social construction that makes people less likely to openly discuss these thoughts and feelings. Most people experiencing suicidality already feel bad about themselves; socially sanctioned negative judgments only causes further harm.

## What Can I do?

When someone you know appears to be struggling, there are warning signs that you can keep in mind to identify if suicide may be on their mind. You may notice that they don't appear to be interested in their favourite activity anymore, that they are withdrawing from family and friends or saying things like "I just can't take it anymore".

Sometimes simply sitting & actively listening to someone without judgement can help provide a sense of connection and a feeling of being heard and understood. You don't need to have all the answers, just offering a kind ear and a compassionate heart can make all the difference.

## Our View at SPP

Our position at SPP is that suicide is neither a moral failure nor a label of so-called mental illness. Instead, we believe suicidal ideation is a variation on the human experience in response to suffering. It usually stems from difficult personal or situational circumstances, social disconnection or excruciating physical or emotional pain. Attempting to improve one's life circumstances, enhance social connection and reduce pain through gaining the support of family, friends and/or professional help are often the best means for reducing the frequency and intensity of suicidal thoughts and feelings.

## SPP Coaches & Mentors

SPP Coaches & Mentors take a kind, compassionate & empathetic approach to all clients with the understanding that their suicidal ideation is often a response to difficult life circumstances and/or relentless physical or psychological pain. We don't react with fear or judgement, but instead welcome suicide-related disclosures. We recognize that when clients openly share, they are showing trust, thus creating opportunities for interpersonal and emotional connection. Our approach towards assessment and intervention is very much oriented towards wellness & the relational process, whilst embracing holistic, collaborative, strengths-based processes & principles.

*To learn more about Suicide and how you could help in the fight against suicide, contact TALK SUICIDE Support Service on 1800 008 255 to discuss tailoring a training package to suit your needs.*

TALK SUICIDE Support Service is an initiative of Suicide Prevention Pathways Inc. (SPP) offering programs that educate, raise awareness and above all provide emotional and practical support to those at risk of suicide and their family and friends. For more information visit [www.spp.org.au](http://www.spp.org.au) or call us on 1800 008 255.

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