

## Where to get help

In the event of a crisis, when the suicide urges become very intense or if you feel unsure if they can keep safe, you can do one of the following:

- For immediate help, call 999. Or if you think you can do so safely, take the person to the emergency room at your nearest hospital.
- If you suspect someone has attempted suicide, don't leave the person alone; and get help from a trained professional.
- SOS Helpline: 1800 221 4444 (24-hour)
- IMH Helpline: 6389 2222 (24-hour)
- Visit the IMH Emergency Room: 10 Buangkok View, Buangkok Green Medical Park, Singapore 539747

### Additional resources



Chatsafe:  
A young person's guide for communicating safely online about suicide



International Association  
for Suicide Prevention resources



Self-compassion video  
for the care-giver

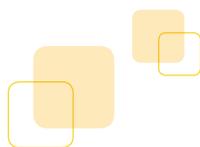
### Disclaimer

Please note that we do not have any propriety or financial interest in recommending these resources. The recommendations are solely for therapeutic use. This brochure by no means replace professional help and advice. If you are in severe distress, please seek help from a psychiatrist and/or psychologist.

**Institute of Mental Health**  
Buangkok Green Medical Park  
10 Buangkok View  
Singapore 539747  
General Enquiries: 6389 2000  
Appointment Line: 6389 2200  
Mental Health Helpline: 6389 2222

www.imh.com.sg

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# HELPING SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL



# SOME FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE

Suicide is a real concern in Singapore – there were a total of 400 reported suicides in 2019<sup>1</sup>. It is estimated that for every person who died from suicide, at least six people survived a suicide. It can be stressful when someone you care about is feeling suicidal. Many people may feel helpless because they do not know what to say or do in such situations.

Contrary to common misconceptions, people who feel suicidal are not attention-seeking or necessarily have a mental illness. They feel suicidal when their coping resources are overwhelmed by psychological pain. When these feelings become too much to handle, people feel hopeless and turn to suicide as a way to express, or to escape their pain. In addition, people who talk about feeling suicidal are likely to attempt suicide. Hence, always take anyone who talks about suicide seriously.



## Suicide risk factors

Several risk factors associated with suicide include hopelessness, the presence of mental disorder(s), chronic physical illnesses, trauma, adversity, alienation from family and friends (including loneliness and a lack of reciprocal care), having a view that one is a burden to others, family conflict, past suicide attempts, unemployment, impulsivity, and feelings of defeat or being trapped.

## Common warning signs for suicide

### Speech:

- “My family is better off without me.”
- “My life is meaningless.”
- “I’m worthless and a burden to others.”
- “I won’t be around for long.”
- Saying goodbye to people as if they won’t be seen again

### Behaviour:

- Giving away treasured possessions
- Putting important affairs into order or settling important life affairs
- Researching suicide methods
- Writing suicide notes (including emails, diaries, blogs or posts in social media)
- Withdrawing from family and friends

### Mood:

- Emotional outbursts (anger, irritability, or sadness)
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Sudden calmness after a period of moodiness
- Loss of interest in doing things they used to enjoy
- Feelings of shame or anxiety



## Resources for helping

### Am I okay?

Before responding to someone who is at risk of suicide, take a moment to check in with yourself in terms of how you feel. Your well-being is just as important and you need to be mentally and emotionally ready to help. Once you have decided to help, think about the type of support you can offer and when you are able to offer it to the person who is suicidal.

### Remain non-judgmental

The factors that lead someone to become suicidal are complex. Refrain from making judgments, assumptions or interrupting them when they talk. Sometimes, even with your best intentions, trying too hard to give advice can be counterproductive. An example of an unhelpful thing to say is to tell them that if they die by suicide, they are selfish for affecting their family and friends. People who are suicidal are often already struggling with guilt and being a burden to others and adding to their guilt will not be helpful. Instead, let them know that you care for them, are interested in understanding them and invite them to communicate with you.

### Ask direct questions

It is a myth that asking someone if they are suicidal will make them more suicidal. Instead, asking creates an opportunity to talk about feelings which may reduce the risk of acting on suicidal thoughts.

Examples of questions you can ask:

- Do you ever feel like just giving up and ending it all?
- Are you thinking about dying or hurting yourself?
- Are you thinking about suicide?
- Have you thought about how or when you would do it?

### Encourage them to seek help

Let them know that seeking help is not a sign of weakness and everyone deserves support. Ask them what sort of support they need from you. You can offer practical support such as offering to accompany them for their appointments, if necessary. You can also explore what coping resources they have tried so far and what they found helpful.