

Suicide Prevention

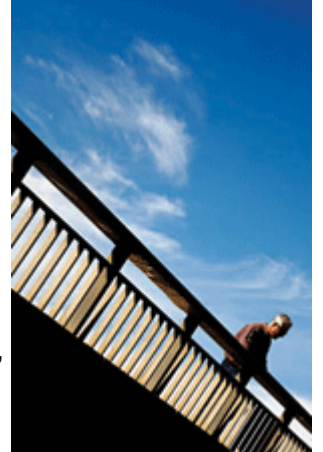
The one thing that will save a human life is a human relationship.....i>

Although suicide remains a relatively uncommon event, it is still a tragic loss of life with devastating consequences for families, friends, work-mates and the ADF. Intervening when people have thoughts of suicide or who have engaged in suicide related behaviour is possible. Suicide is a difficult subject but it is everyone's business.

What makes a person engage in suicide behaviour(s)?

While there is no 'typical' profile for someone who may contemplate suicide, there are some common risk factors and signs that we all need to be aware of in an effort to save lives. Some of these factors and signs include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Any perceived significant losses (death of a loved one, pet, loss of a relationship, loss of self esteem or community standing),
- Relationship difficulties,
- Mental health concerns,
- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness,
- Past history of suicide related behaviour,
- Alcohol and/or other drug use,
- Legal or financial trouble,
- Lack of current and accessible social supports that the person is willing to use, and
- Emotional pain that does not seem to have an end.



What should I look for?

Risk factors and signs are simply those things that alert us to the possibility that someone may be thinking about suicide. If we see or hear risk factors or signs for help, they are an opportunity for us to ask if the person is thinking of suicide. People can become very frightened if they see these signs, but it's vital to remember that signs are an attempt by a person at risk of suicide to communicate that they are not coping and that they are overwhelmed by intense emotional pain. This pain is often associated with stressful events and/or loss.

Everyone has different levels of tolerance to stress and pain and these levels change over time within an individual. We all try to cope as best we can during significant, and sometimes painful changes in our lives. However, sometimes the burden of pain and suffering can be so great that an individual is overwhelmed to a point where he/she loses their usual effective coping ability. Suicide may seem to be an option at this point but life can also be chosen and usually will be - if someone is there to help them sort out the problems.

Signs may appear as changes in a person's situation, their behaviours, physical state, thoughts, or feelings. These may include: (This is not an exhaustive list):

- Talk or hints of suicide behaviour,
- Preoccupation with death,
- Giving away possessions,
- Isolation or withdrawal,
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use,
- Lack of interest in hobbies, appearance, or the future, and

- Performance difficulties.

The supervisor's role in suicide prevention/intervention is to:

- Be suicide aware so that you can identify personnel at risk,
- Actively support suicide intervention efforts and recognise that suicide prevention/intervention requires effort from all members of the ADF,
- Be aware of the resources that can assist your people, and
- Take all thoughts of suicide and suicide related behaviour(s) seriously.

Enhance the development of 'esprit de corps' in the work place by:

- Building a culture that fosters both a sense of belonging and 'looking after your mates',
- Offering social support and
- Developing a culture that encourages early intervention and supports those seeking help.

What should I do?

If you or someone you know has thoughts of suicide or have engaged in any form of suicide related behaviour, seek help immediately. Contact your local Medical Centre, Psychologist, Social Worker, Chaplain or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day. You do not have to deal with this alone.

Provide "AID"

ASK directly and **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK** - "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

INTERVENE - immediately assist the person to seek help.

DON'T keep it a secret.

Secure "LIFE"

LOCATE - help

INFORM - chain of command

FIND - someone to stay with the person

EXPEDITE - get help immediately