

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS AND ASSESSMENT

Warning signs are often the subtle – and sometimes not so subtle – things we observe or hear. Many of these warning signs are not overly alarming individually, but collectively they become very concerning.

- Loss of interest in things they use to care about
- Irritability and edginess increases
- Giving things away
- Visiting or calling people and saying “Goodbye”
- Methodically making amends, settling quarrels
- Withdrawal and isolation from friends and family
- Sudden decline in functioning at school or work
- Suddenly happier, right after a long, deep depression
- Change in appearance – hygiene, etc.
- Increased risk-taking behaviour (e.g., use of drugs, reckless driving)
- Talking about feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless
- Hoarding of pills, hiding of weapons
- Talking about suicide and/or what it would be like to die (preoccupied with death)
- Self-injury
- Threatening suicide
- Indirect statements:
 - “What’s the use of going on.”
 - “My parents would be happier if I’d never been born.”
 - “I just can’t take it anymore.”
- Direct statements:
 - “Sometimes I just feel like killing myself.”
 - “If I killed myself, then people would be sorry.”
 - “You won’t have to worry about me much longer.”

Suicide Assessment for Severity of Risk

- 1) Do they have a plan? If yes, what is the plan and do they have access to this plan?
- 2) How often are they thinking about suicide?
- 3) How badly do they wish to end their life?
- 4) Have they felt suicidal in the past, or is this the first time?
- 5) Have they ever attempted suicide before? When?
- 6) Are they using drugs or alcohol – do they have access?
- 7) Will they be home alone?
- 8) Do they take medications for mental health concerns – have they been taking them?

LEVEL OF RISK:	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
Suicidal ideation frequency (how often?)	Occasional	Intermittent	Continuous
Intensity (how strong?)	Mild	Strong	Overwhelming
Lethality of method	Not high	Possibly lethal	Very lethal
Availability of means	Doesn't have access	Can get access	Details worked out
Specificity of plan (how, what where, when?)	Not considered	Considered details	Details worked out

If the level of risk is very high and help is needed immediately, take the individual directly to an emergency room. If you are worried that the individual may jump out of a moving car or put your life in danger by possibly grabbing your steering wheel while in motion, then phone the local police for assistance.