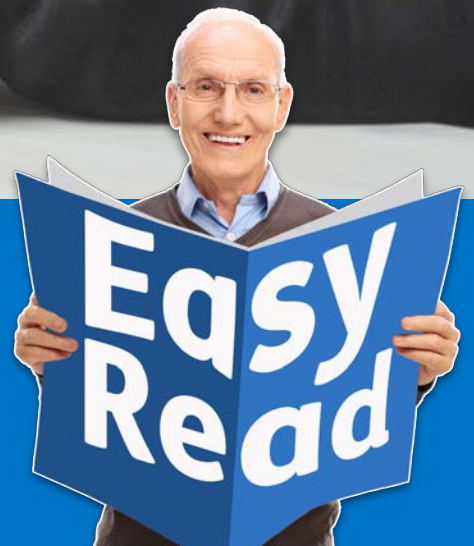


Preventing suicide in older people



MindEd
for Families

online advice and support you can trust

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Suicide can be prevented



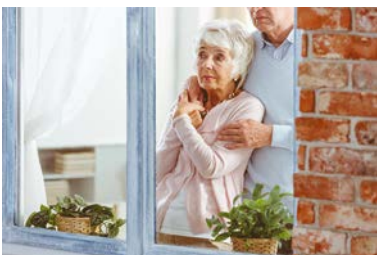
Suicide can be prevented as long as people have access to the right support at the right time.



Many people think about suicide long before they talk to anybody about it.



The people who are most likely to take their own life are people who don't talk about their problems.



It can seem hard to help, but being kind and letting people know you want to help can often be a great help. It may be enough.

Why older people take their own lives



Mental health problems

Poor mental health is one of the main reasons why people take their own lives.



Suicide thinking can happen more with certain mental health problems like:

- Depression
- Taking too much alcohol or drugs
- Dealing with a big shock
- Bipolar disorder



Social problems

People can think about suicide when they have problems in their life like:

- Losing someone or losing a relationship
- Problems with housing or money



Physical health

People are living longer. But many people are living with a health problem.

People are more likely to think about taking their own life if they are suffering from:

- Lots of pain
- A condition that affects their brain like stroke, dementia or head injury



Warning signs



Suicides are prevented every day because people get the right support.



Three major warning signs are:

- Somebody saying that they are going to hurt or kill themselves
- Somebody looking for ways they can cause themselves harm or end their life
- Talking or writing about dying or suicide



You must take these things seriously.



There are other signs of possible mental health problems.

Some mental health problems can increase the chance of suicide.



So look out for these signs of mental health problems:

- Doesn't want to look you in the eye



- Only talks when they are spoken to



- Doesn't contact friends and family



- Doesn't smile so much



- Seems to be 'lost in thought'



- Hasn't much energy



- Changes their mood in a dramatic way



- Feels hopeless or trapped



- Is angry or in a rage



- Sleeps badly



- Makes arrangements for after their death

Practical steps for family and friends

Listening

It's good to really listen to the person and give them the time to talk.



- Pick a comfortable and private place, like your home



- Turn down the noise. Put your phone on silent, turn off the TV



- Show that you are really listening. If somebody doesn't want to talk, don't push it



- Ask questions in a way that encourages them to open up and talk more



The Samaritans

Sometimes people find it easier to talk to someone else rather than family or friends.



The Samaritans have volunteers who are trained to be good listeners.



The Samaritans provide confidential support for people who feel distressed or despair.



Phone: **116 123**
when calling from the UK

Web: **www.samaritans.org**

How to respond

Once someone has started to open up, you need to respond in a kind and sensitive way.

You could:

- Listen to what they say. Give them time and space





- Reassure them that they're doing the right thing
- Show that you are understanding. You could say something like "Many people would feel this way".



- Say that you are there to help. Try to really understand what the problem is.
- Help them to feel good about themselves.



Don't say things like:

- "What do you expect at your age?"
- "You've only got yourself to blame"
- "The same thing happened to me but it was much worse"
- "You're worrying about nothing"



Asking for help



Asking for help is much harder than it sounds.

The first step is realising that there is a problem.



The next step is realising that with the right support, no problem is too great to overcome.



Get advice

If you believe somebody is at immediate risk of suicide call the emergency services straight away.



If you are having suicidal thoughts, seek advice from:

- A specialist mental health service
- Your local doctor (GP)
- The Samaritans

For more information



This resource is part of the MindEd online learning site.

For more information please contact:-

Web: www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk

Email: minded@rcpsych.ac.uk

Twitter: @MindEdUK

