

SUICIDE AWARENESS: PEER SUPPORT

ASK

LISTEN

CONNECT

SUICIDE AWARENESS

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INFORMATIONAL RESOURCE

This is to serve as an informational resource only. As a peer support person, **you are not expected** to become a life-saving counsellor, a mental health first aider, trained in intervention skills, or be able to “predict” suicide.

Some of you may have additional suicide prevention training, such as **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)**, but most of you will not.

This outline is to provide you with **information and basic skills** when reaching out to a person who may be having thoughts of suicide.

What does a person having suicidal thoughts look like?

- ▶ Giving away personal possessions
- ▶ Reckless or dangerous behaviours
- ▶ Losing interest in personal hygiene
- ▶ Hopelessness or desperation
- ▶ Talk about going away or not being around in the future
- ▶ Talking about being a burden or looking for an escape
- ▶ Isolating behaviour
- ▶ Previous attempts at suicide
- ▶ Sudden changes in behaviour or emotions
- ▶ Life traumas or anniversaries of previous traumas

STEP BY STEP APPROACH

1. Ask the question

If you think that someone is having thoughts of suicide, the most important thing you can do is openly ask the question.

- ▶ “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”
 - ▶ Maybe that is an uncomfortable thing for you to ask, so practice just saying the word suicide out loud. This might be a good first step in preparing yourself.
- ▶ Other ways to ask this question include:
 - ▶ “Are you thinking about suicide?”
 - ▶ “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
 - ▶ “Are you thinking about taking your own life?”

It might feel easier to ask the question “are you thinking about hurting yourself?”, but this can mean a lot of different things for people.

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- ▶ Try and ask specifically about suicide to avoid any confusion or uncertainty.

2. Listen.

You don't have to listen for long to know if a person needs further help.

- ▶ Listening shows that:
 - ▶ You care,
 - ▶ You are open to talking about suicide,
 - ▶ You are reducing the stigma they may be feeling about opening up.
- ▶ **Active listening** is also a way of gathering information that you may want to pass on when you are connecting them with other resources, such as:
 - ▶ Their current feelings,
 - ▶ Plans they may have,
 - ▶ Or other information that may give insight to their current situation.

3. Connect to other resources.

Once you have openly asked the question and they have declared that they are having thoughts of suicide, you need to access further supports.

- ▶ Inform the person that you want to reach out for extra support because you care, but need help from someone with more skills or training.

Explaining to the person why you are concerned about them and why you want to reach out for extra support can be scary, but it is also reassuring.

Usually, people don't actually want to take their own lives, but feel that no one is listening, and that there are no other options.

By extending a message of hope and help, you may already be giving them relief.

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ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES:

- ▶ [Counselling Services](#): BR276, 604-984-1744, counselling@capilanou.ca
- ▶ [Security](#): AR017, 604-984-1763, guards@capilanou.ca
- ▶ ASIST Trained Staff: Contact wellbeing@capilanou.ca

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

- ▶ Crisis Lines in BC: www.crisislines.bc.ca
- ▶ Crisis Lines across Canada: www.suicideprevention.ca

24/7 Phone Suicide Support:

- ▶ BC Suicide Helpline: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
- ▶ [Aboriginal Crisis Line](#) (KUU-US): Toll-free: 1-800-588-8717
- ▶ [Kids Help Phone](#): 1-800-668-6868 (up to age 20)
- ▶ [First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line](#): 1-855-242-3310

Mental Health Emergency Services/Crisis Response:

- ▶ [Access and Assessment Centre](#) (VGH) offers short term treatment on-site, by telephone and by mobile response. Clinical staff provide 24/7 support, stabilization and crisis management. Call 604-675-3700 or Walk-in: Joseph & Rosalie Segal & Family Health Centre, Level 1 East Entrance, 803 West 12th Ave, Vancouver.
- ▶ [Mental Health Emergency Services](#) (Richmond): 604-244-5562
- ▶ Fraser Health After Hours Mental Health Services: 1-877-384-8062

Hospital/911

Online/Text Chat Support:

- ▶ YouthInBC.com (7 days a week, noon -1am)
- ▶ YouthSpace.ca: SMS 1-778-783-0177 (6pm - midnight)
- ▶ CrisisCentreChat.ca: for adults (noon - 1am)

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CONFIDENTIALITY

When a person discloses to you that they are thinking of suiciding, it is important that you **never make promises you cannot keep**. Quite often, the person with thoughts of suicide will ask you to keep what they are telling you secret.

Whenever someone is at risk of taking their life, or fatally injuring themselves or someone else, the **rules of confidentiality no longer apply**.

You can promise to only tell those who need to know, but you cannot promise to keep this information to yourself.

TAKE EVERY MENTION OF SUICIDE SERIOUSLY

You may have people in your life who frequently talk about suicide. Maybe they use it as a “threat” when they are angry or feeling overwhelmed, or maybe they say it in passing or in a “joking” way.

It is important to make sure the people around you know that you take any mention of suicide seriously.

If you are faced with someone who **frequently makes threats of suicide**, make sure they know that you will take each and every threat very seriously.

This will help deter people from making jokes about taking their own life and will help those who are making serious threats become aware that you are open to talking about suicide, and that you are willing to act on things.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DEEPEN YOUR HELPING KNOWLEDGE?

- ▶ Attend a **SafeTALK** training offered by Student Affairs. (Contact wellbeing@capilanou.ca to request a training or more information)
- ▶ **Reach out** to campus and community resources yourself to understand how the services work and how to further connect your community.
- ▶ **Take care of yourself**. Acting as a support for someone thinking about harming themselves can be draining on your own mental health. Make sure you take advantage of the resources available for yourself.
- ▶ **Become ASIST Trained**. (If you have your ASIST Training, contact wellbeing@capilanou.ca to add yourself to the on-campus list of ASIST trained individuals)

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