

# understand suicide better



## 1. WHY DO WE NEED TALK ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION?

Suicide is currently the leading cause of death for youth in India aged 15-29 years.

**However, suicides are preventable and with appropriate skills, anyone can be involved in prevention efforts which could change the trajectory of someone's life.**

Misinformation, stigma and lack of knowledge about support services continue to act as huge barriers for youth in accessing timely support or care. Building forums for open dialogue about suicide and its prevention is a critical first step towards better prevention.

## 2. WHAT IS SUICIDE AND SUICIDAL IDEATION?

Suicide is the act of ending one's own life. Suicidal ideation means having thoughts about ending one's own life or thinking about specific methods of suicide, or making clear plans to take one's own life. A person may also experience thoughts or feelings about ending their life without acting on these. Everyone's experience of suicidal feelings is unique to them.

**Remember that you are not alone, and there is support available!**

If you are experiencing emotional pain or distress, suicide might look like the only way out.

But these feelings are not permanent. Things can improve, and you can find the motivation to live again.

## 3. WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE?

Warning signs are indications that someone may be at risk of suicide (immediately or in the near future). Many suicides are preceded by warning signs, whether verbal or behavioural.

**It is important to learn the warning signs and look out for them. It may help to save a life—yours or someone else's.**

## WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

### VERBAL

If the person talks about:

- Wanting to die or kill themselves. For example "I wish I were dead".
- Experiencing unbearable/unending pain. For example "I'm tired of life, I just can't go on".
- The meaninglessness of life that there is no point in living further. For example "My life has no value"
- Feeling worthless or being a burden on others. For example "My family would be better off without me")

### BEHAVIOURAL

If their behaviour signals:

- Past suicide attempt or self-harm attempt (signs of self injury)
- Isolating from friends and family/wanting to be left alone
- Purchasing or arranging means to attempt suicide
- Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order when there is no other logical explanation for doing this
- Loss of interest in things they used to care about
- Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seeing them again
- Increased use of drug/alcohol, or relapse after a period of recovery
- Sudden interest or disinterest in religion

### EMOTIONAL

If the person shows:

- Sudden mood swings
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Feelings of shame/guilt
- Signs of heightened stress, anxiety, and restlessness
- Mental health problems (depression, anxiety, etc.)
- A sudden calmness after a long period of low mood may indicate that a person has decided to take their own life

#### 4. WHY MIGHT SOMEONE HAVE SUICIDAL FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS?

Anyone can have thoughts of suicide, irrespective of their age, gender, or background. Mostly, no single cause (e.g., failure in an examination) is sufficient to explain why suicide happens. A person may act on their suicidal feelings when multiple stressful situations or factors create feelings of hopelessness or helplessness.

However, there are certain situations that can place a person at greater risk of attempting suicide.

These include:

- Previous suicide attempt
- Access to means to end their life
- Consumption of alcohol or drugs
- Physical and/or emotional abuse
- Physical illness that causes disability or chronic pain
- Living with depression or any other mental illness, etc.
- Discrimination and/or marginalization (for example faced by religious/caste/class gender/sexual minorities)
- Sudden stress due to financial, family, academic or relationship problems

The presence of these factors does not necessarily lead to suicidal thoughts or behaviour but can exacerbate feelings of anger, hopelessness, guilt or helplessness.

It is therefore important to know about these factors and look out for any warning signs.

#### 5. HOW LONG MIGHT SOMEONE FEEL SUICIDAL?

How long these feelings last can differ for everyone.

**While such thoughts may return, they are not permanent and do go away.**

With support and help, one can go on to live a fulfilling life. The earlier one identifies their feelings related to suicide, the quicker they can get support to overcome these feelings.

#### 6. WHERE IS HELP AVAILABLE?

**If there is an emergency:**

- **Call your local emergency services/ambulance**
- **Go to your nearest hospital emergency room**
- **Contact a suicide crisis helpline**

**If you have thoughts of suicide but aren't in a crisis, you can access the following options:**

**Call a support helpline:**

Telephone-based counselling services can be a safe way of getting information or support when you need it. Talking to someone on the telephone can also be helpful if you are finding it difficult to open up to the people you know or speak to someone face-to-face.

**Make an appointment with a mental health professional such as a psychologist or counselor:**

They can help you understand why you're experiencing suicidal feelings and think about ways you can help yourself cope with and resolve them.

**Visit your local doctor/general practitioner:**

They will listen to you and help you figure out the next steps. They might prescribe you medication to ease the symptoms, if required, and refer you to a mental health professional.

**Reach out to a peer support group:**

This could be another helpful space to share your thoughts and learn tips for coping better from others who may be going through similar experiences. It can help you feel less alone.

( Outlive is a suicide prevention programme for young people by Sangath, The Centre for Mental Health Law & Policy, and Quicksand. Learn more at [www.outlive.in](http://www.outlive.in). )

**KIRAN HELPLINE**  
1800-599-0019  
AVAILABLE DAILY, 24X7

**SANGATH TELE-COUNSELLING**  
HELPLINE +91 11 41198666  
AVAILABLE DAILY 10 AM-6 PM

**Outlive**