

# SUICIDE

Suicide should always be taken seriously, as it is one of the leading causes of death among young people. If you hear someone talking about suicide, it may be a desperate call for help and it is important to take it seriously.

## WHY WOULD SOMEONE COMMIT SUICIDE?

People commit suicide because their problems seem so overwhelming that they feel that there is no way out. Most young people who commit suicide have depression which has not been identified or treated. Suicide is not a normal response to stress, nor is it part of being a teenager.

## I THINK MY FRIEND IS SUICIDAL

If you think someone is suicidal it is important that you listen to them and try to put yourself in their shoes so you can better understand what they are going through, even if it seems completely unrealistic to you.

**YOU SHOULD SEE A COUNSELLOR FOR INFORMATION AND ADVISE ON HOW TO APPROACH YOUR FRIEND OR TRY TO GET YOUR FRIEND TO VISIT THE COUNSELLOR WITH YOU BY THEIR SIDE.**

**Some common problems that may lead to suicide include:**

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Major depression
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Feelings of worthlessness

## WARNING SIGNS

- Suicidal thoughts
- Intense hopelessness or sadness
- Preoccupation with death
- Loss of interest in regular activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Emotionally unstable
- Use of drugs or alcohol
- Talk about what it will be like when they're gone
- Giving away valued possessions

Keep an open mind without being judgmental and just ask if he/she is thinking about committing suicide. Asking this will not be putting the idea into their head so don't worry about getting straight to the point. This will show you care and your friend will likely be relieved that you asked, knowing that he/she is not alone.

***SUICIDE IS SERIOUS SO DON'T LAUGH IT OFF TELLING YOUR FRIEND TO GET OVER IT!***

Take your friend seriously and try to offer practical help towards solving the problem. If the suicidal thoughts are strong, take your friend to the student health clinic or a hospital emergency room. Know that it is ok to break confidentiality (trust) when it comes to a serious issue like suicide. Better safe than sorry.

✓ ***CHECK THESE OUT:***

<http://www.camh.net>

<http://www.suicide.org>

## ~~ Learn from Kevin's story ~~

I used to be on an adventure racing team with a couple of best friends of mine named Tim and Andy. We could conquer anything together. We'd rappel down cliffs, kayak through rapids and run up to 20 kms through mountains. It was exhilarating! While training for a big race, we all went mountain climbing up Mount Robson. We had planned on a specific route but Tim convinced us to take this shortcut. We were reluctant but we went for it. We got to this crevice and the walls started crumbling a bit. I was nervous and I climbed up and out fast. Tim was next, but then when it came to Andy's turn the rocks started falling ovetop and one knocked him off the side of the wall and he fell to his death. Tim felt guilty for picking the route and he couldn't get over it.

The next summer I thought he had gotten over it, but while training he kept dragging behind me more and more. Eventually he stopped showing up for practice and he would even bail on our boy's night out. At first I thought he was just busy with school but when I discovered he had dropped out of school months prior, I realized something was seriously wrong.

I approached him and asked him what the problem was and he admitted he still felt guilty and said he didn't deserve to live. He broke down and said he had quit school and had been spending most of his time just bumming around at home.

### **What changed the situation?**

I asked him if he was thinking of suicide and he said he was. He said he hadn't told anyone about his thoughts. A few days after breaking down telling me everything, you could just see the weight lifting off his shoulders. He was still really down so I went to my doctor to ask for advice. I would visit Tim often, even if he said he didn't want company, and I'd bring funny movies and just be with him. I encouraged Tim to go see a counsellor too, which he did. Eventually we even were able to talk about Andy and how much we both missed him. About a year later we got back out there and started our adventure racing again.

### **My advice to someone who has a suicidal friend:**

Be there for him/her. If you have any suspicion that he/she might be thinking of killing themselves, talk to them. Get help! If I hadn't talked to Tim I would have lost my two best friends, as if one wasn't enough. Talking can save lives – don't be too embarrassed to open up.