

# Teen Suicide Prevention



## SUICIDE HELPLINE

**0800 567 567** (24 hours)

**SMS 31393**



Netcare Foundation  
Changing lives

[www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org)

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**SUICIDE**  
is a permanent solution  
to a temporary problem

## Warning Signs of Suicide...

**The more you know about Depression & Suicide,  
the more you can help yourself and your friends**

**Suicide Myth:** Some people believe that people who talk about suicide won't actually do it. That's not true. In fact, 75% of people who take their own lives give some warning. All suicide threats should be taken seriously and. Knowing the warning signs of suicide can save a life.

**Talking or joking about suicide:** your friend may talk about dying, threaten to kill him or herself, or say things like "Nothing matters", or "I wish I was dead" or "I won't be around much longer."

**Depression:** your friend may feel hopeless, lose interest in doing anything, and withdraw from friends and family.

**Preparing for death:** many teens who are planning suicide will give favourite things away, or even say goodbye.

**Self-criticism:** things like "I can't do anything right", "I'm hideous and pathetic" - may mean they are feeling suicidal.

**Changes in personality:** someone who is usually sociable, may not want to go out, may become negative, aggressive or irritable, and lose their friendships.

**Loss of interest in appearance, drop in hygiene:** if your friend stops caring what they look like, getting dressed or even bathing or washing.

**Risk-taking behaviour:** often people who are feeling suicidal do risky, dangerous things like drink and drive, have unprotected sex, or take drugs.

**Excessive feelings of guilt, self-blame, failure:** if someone is depressed, they often feel guilty and blame themselves, and it can be very difficult to talk to them.

**Suddenly feel better:** if you know a friend, who has been very depressed and hasn't been for treatment, is suddenly 'back to normal' this could be dangerous. It may mean they have set a date for their suicide and know the pain will soon end.

**Writing poems, essays about death, SMSs or painting images of death:** this is a cry for help, listen to it, and get help.

# Helping a friend or family member...

You may know if your friend, or a family member, is going through a tough time. Maybe there has been a breakup of a relationship, divorce, a death in the family, financial worries or school pressure and your friend is feeling very stressed and down. Maybe your friend has Depression.

**Ask:** If you have a friend who you are worried about, talk to your friend about it as soon as possible. People who are depressed, or suicidal, feel very alone so just talking shows your friend that you are there for them. It is a hard thing to do but it could save a life

**Try:** *I've noticed that you're really down / in a bad place and that you've been talking about wanting to be dead a lot. I care about you and am not going to judge you. Have you been having thoughts of hurting or killing yourself?"*

**Listen:** Listen to your friend without judgement. Don't tell them you understand – ask them to tell you how they feel.

**Tell:** Even if your friend has made you swear to keep their feelings of suicide a secret – don't! Seek help for your friend as soon as possible. You may feel like it, but you are not betraying your friend's trust – you are saving their life.

Remember: **RATHER LOSE THE FRIENDSHIP THAN LOSE THE FRIEND.**

If you are worried about someone you care about, tell an adult you trust (a parent, teacher, coach, doctor) and call SADAG on 0800 567 567.



## If you are thinking about suicide:

- Tell someone – a friend, a teacher, a coach, a parents, or a friend's parent
- Call **SADAG 0800 567 567 (24 hours) or SMS 31393**
- Don't use drugs or alcohol and make sure you are not alone
- Spend time with friends and loved ones even though you probably want to be alone
- Lock knives, rope, pills and guns away
- Display pictures of your favourite people

**Suicidal feelings and thoughts are symptoms of Depression**

**– and are not a sign of weakness or failure.**

**Don't keep feelings of depression or suicide a secret.  
There is no shame and there IS help. Talk about it,  
connect with others. Get help. Call SADAG.**

# Depression

Being a teenager often means having lots of emotional ups and downs. School, parents, friends, relationships can be confusing and frustrating - things can be great one minute and horrible the next. Many people believe that sadness is just a normal part of growing up, but teens who feel really down and unhappy for two weeks or more at a time may have depression.

In fact about 1 in every 5 teens get depression. So, if you or a friend feels down, you are not alone, and this brochure is here to help. Depression is a “whole-body” illness that involves your body, mood and thoughts. It affects the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things.

Depression is not a sign of weakness - it can't be wished away, and people with depression cannot just pull themselves together. But the good news is 80% of people, who suffer from depression, get better with treatment so there is no need to feel this way. Take a look at the list and mark the things that describe your thoughts, feelings, or actions today or in the last two weeks.

- Loss of interest in things you like to do
- Sadness that won't go away
- Irritability or feeling angry a lot
- Feeling guilty or hopeless
- Feeling tense or worrying
- Crying a lot
- Spending most of the time alone
- Eating too much or too little
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Having low energy or restless feelings
- Feeling tired all the time
- Missing school, daydreaming, or doing badly in school
- Not being able to make decisions or concentrate
- Thinking of dying or killing yourself

## ...Getting Help

**Depression is common and it's also very treatable. Treatment for depression can include talk therapy, medication, or a combination of both. Talk therapy with a psychologist, social worker or counsellor can help you understand more about why you feel depressed, and ways to cope. Just talking about how you feel can make you feel better.**

Medication is sometimes prescribed by a doctor to help you feel better. It can take a few weeks before you feel the medication working. Every person's brain is different so what works well for one person might not be good for another. We can all benefit from mood boosting activities like exercise, dance, music, writing in a diary, even hanging out with friends.



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# Suicide

**What causes suicide?** There are many reasons why a teen may feel like they want to end their life.

**Depression** - is the leading cause of suicide. Depression makes people feel hopeless, helpless and often they see no reason to live.

**Alcohol and Drug Use** - is often connected to suicide. Alcohol & drugs can actually add to depression, and make it worse in depressed people. They also effect your judgement, and lessen self-control.

**Bullying** - is a common problem in schools and many children & teens who are bullied feel worthless and hopeless. Being bullied can make people feel depressed and sadly many teens who are targets of physical or cyber bullying attempt suicide or become very depressed.

**Self-harm** - many people believe that teens who hurt or injure themselves are suicidal. This isn't always true. People hurt themselves as a way to cope with problems. This isn't a healthy way and there is help!

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## Why do teens take their lives?

Remember that teens who are thinking about suicide feel alone and isolated, and often feel like no one understands how they feel. Changes in life may be upsetting and they may want to escape a difficult problem or situation, or get relief from terrible stress.

Many teens who are suicidal feel out of control and they see suicide as a way to get back a sense of control in their lives. Sadly many teens feel like they are a burden on their family, and suicide is seen as a way to relieve that burden or punish themselves for something they think they have done wrong.

**Always remember that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.**

24 Hour Helpline 0800 567 567



## Risk Factors :

- Previous attempts
- Family history of depression and/or suicide
- Alcohol and drug use/abuse
- Physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Chronic illness
- Have a disability – learning, mental or physical
- Poor parent-child relationship, domestic violence, uneasy family dynamics
- Recent loss – death of a loved one, breakup of a relationship
- Disruption – change in schools, moving
- Exposure to severe or continual violence

## Self Help

Depression can make you feel exhausted, worthless, helpless, and hopeless  
Remember this is part of the depression & will go away when you get treatment.

- (1) **Understand what depression is so you know what you are dealing with**
- (2) **Do things to keep your mind busy and things that make you feel better, like exercise, watching a movie or a sport match, or being with friends**
- (3) **Set realistic goals and take a reasonable amount of responsibility**
- (4) **Break large tasks into small ones, and do what you can.  
Be realistic and take one step at a time**
- (5) **Confide in someone you trust - it is better than being alone and keeping your thoughts to yourself**
- (6) **Keep a diary or journal. It is a great way to get your feelings and thoughts out**
- (7) **Let your family and friends help you**

“ My best friend has been acting so strange lately.  
She’s really scaring me because yesterday she said  
the world would be better off without her ”