Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. The more you know about depression and suicide, the more you can help.

**Warning signs of suicide**

You may have heard that people who talk about suicide won't actually go through with it. That's not true. In fact, 75% of people who commit suicide give some warning. This means all suicide threats should be taken seriously - and you can do something to stop a friend taking their 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 that 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 - may mean they are feeling suicidal.

**Changes in personality:** someone who is usually sociable, may not want to go out, may feel less alone, less isolated, and more cared about and understood.

**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, suddenly is '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, mem's or painting images of deaths:** this is a cry for help, listen to it, and get help.

**Helping a friend or family member**

**Ask:** If you have a friend who is talking about suicide or showing other warning signs, don't wait to see if he or she starts to feel better - talk about it. Talking helps in many ways. It allows you to get help for the person: just talking about it may help the person to feel less alone, less isolated, and more cared about and understood. Talking may also help them see another solution. Asking someone if he/she is having thoughts about suicide can be difficult. Try: "I've noticed that you've been talking a lot about wanting to be dead. Have you been having thoughts about hurting or killing yourself?"

**Listen:** Listen to your friend without judging and offer reassurance that you're there and you care. Stay close and don't leave them alone. Don't tell your friend that you understand - let them tell you how they feel.

**Tell:** Even if you're sworn to secrecy and you feel like you'll be betraying your friend if you tell, you should still seek help as soon as possible. It's always safest to get help. Rather lose the friendship than lose the friend. Telling someone can save your friend's life.

**Suicide should not be a secret**

**Self help**

"Two years ago I tried to kill myself. My mom found me and took me to hospital. I was so angry with her! I wanted to die and she stopped me! But now, after working on my depression, I'm glad she found me. I have a lot more I want to do now."

Suicidal feelings and thoughts are part of depression: they are real and not a sign of weakness. Many of us have felt the same way at some time in our lives so don’t be afraid to talk about how you feel.

**Here are some things you can do if you are thinking about suicide:**

- Tell someone right away - a friend, a parent, a teacher, or call SADAG on 0800 567 567 or SMS 31293 - open 7 days a week from 8am to 8pm.
- Make sure you are not alone.
- Don’t use alcohol or drugs.
- Ask your family to lock knives, ropes, pills, and guns away.
- Keep pictures of your favourite people with you.
- Spend time with family and friends. Even though you probably want to be alone, withdrawing and isolating yourself is not a good idea.

Depression doesn't mean a person is "crazy." Depression is a real medical illness. Just like things can go wrong in your body, things can go wrong in your brain. Luckily, most teens who get help for their depression go on to enjoy life and feel better about themselves.

Don't keep suicide a secret - talk about it, get help, and remember that you can fight depression - and win!

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**Email**

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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. Without treatment depression can last for weeks, months, or years. 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.

The key signs and symptoms of depression are:

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

Remember that people 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.

Remember that teens may feel depressed after the death of a loved one - a family member, a friend, even a pet. Suicide may be their way to reunite with dead loved ones. Always remember that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

**Risk Factors:**
- Some teens are more at risk for suicide if:
  - They have tried before
  - There is a history of depression and/or suicide in the family
  - They use alcohol or drugs
  - They have been sexually or physically abused
  - They have a chronic illness
  - They have a learning disability or a mental or physical disability
  - There is a poor parent-child relationship or frequent family fights
  - There has been a recent loss, family or relationship breakup, or a death
  - There has been a disruption in their life like a change in friends, surroundings, or activities
  - They are exposed to severe or continual violence