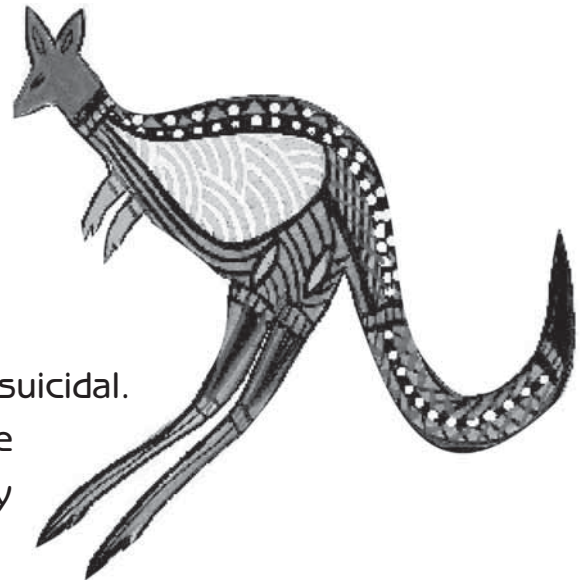


- Are you worried that someone you know might be suicidal?
- Have they attempted suicide before?

It is very frightening to realise that someone you know may be feeling suicidal. If you are concerned about someone this information will help you identify what to look out for, and what you can do to help.



## Warning Signs

It can be hard to tell if someone is feeling suicidal. Warning signs are not always obvious, but sometimes there are clues. Some of these might be:

- Attempting suicide
- Talking or joking about death or suicide
- Expressing thoughts about death through drawings, stories, songs, etc.



- Saying goodbye to people, giving away their things, settling any old or ongoing issues
- Increasing alcohol and/or substance misuse
- Withdrawing from friends, family, the community
- Risky or self-destructive behaviour (putting themselves or others in danger)
- Talking of feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless
- Not taking care of themselves and their appearance
- Suddenly seeming better or at peace after being depressed for awhile
- Being moody, sad, or agro
- Losing interest in things they used to enjoy
- Just don't seem to be themselves

People who are thinking about suicide often feel very alone. They may feel that nobody can help them, or that they are beyond help. They may see suicide as an answer to their problems, and may be unable to see any other way of dealing with their situation. They may believe it is their only way out.

Most people who are suicidal can get through the crisis with the help and support of family, friends, health professionals and the community.

The following tips will help you know what to do:

# Tool Kit

## 1. Act now:

If you think someone is thinking about suicide, now is the time to get them help. Don't just think they'll get over it without some help. It can be very hard, and don't think that you can fix it without help from others. Getting that person help may be what saves their life.

## 2. Have a yarn:

Spend time with the person, let them know you care, and that you're worried about them. Ask them how they are feeling and listen to their answer. Let them do most of the talking. Things can seem a lot better after they have spoken about their problems.

## 3. Ask them if they are thinking about suicide:

This can be very hard but it shows that you care. It also shows them that they are not on their own. Talking about suicide will not put the idea into their head. In fact, it might make them feel that they can have a yarn about how they are feeling.

## 4. Keep them safe:

If a person is thinking about suicide it is important to know how much thought they have put into it. Ask about the following:

- Have they tried before?
- Have they thought about how they would do it?
- Can they get hold of what they need to do it (drugs, knives, etc.)?
- Have they thought about when they would do it?
- Do they have anyone around to support them (family, friends etc.)?

If you are really worried, don't leave the person alone. If possible, remove any means of suicide available to the person. This includes weapons, medications, alcohol and other drugs, possibly even access to the car. Seek immediate help.



### Where to get help

**For immediate crisis intervention when life may be in danger ring the Police or Ambulance on 000 or go to the local Hospital Emergency Department**

#### Primary care and assessment:

Your local Mental Health Team  
(see Community Health Centres in your White Pages)

Your local doctor, Aboriginal or mainstream Health Worker

#### For crisis counselling:

Lifeline 13 11 14  
National 24hr 7 day a week service

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800  
National 24hr 7 day a week service

If you ring Lifeline and can't get through, it just means that all the counsellors are busy. Keep trying, because you will get through, and it shouldn't take that long to talk to someone.

## 5. Have a yarn about what to do now:

Do not agree to keep it a secret. Talk about the other people who can help. The best way to help the person is to get other people involved who can provide the help and support they need.

## 6. Take action:

The person needs to seek help from a range of people in the community, such as:

- Family and friends
- An elder or other community member
- An Aboriginal or mainstream Health Worker
- Doctor
- Aboriginal or mainstream Mental Health Worker
- Counsellor, Psychologist, Social Worker
- Mental Health Services
- Aboriginal Medical Service or other Health Centre
- Emergency Services - Police and Ambulance
- Community Health Centre
- Support Groups
- Religious Ministers
- Lifeline and other telephone counselling services
- Kids Helpline
- School counsellors, youth group leaders, sports coaches

Offer to go with them to an appointment, or be with them while they tell someone else they trust (a friend, relative, etc.).

## 7. Get them to make a promise:

Thoughts of suicide often come back and when they do, the person needs to tell someone. A promise can help make sure this happens. Encourage the person at risk to promise to call you, someone else (even Lifeline 13 11 14) before they harm themselves.

## 8. Look after yourself:

If you're helping someone who is feeling suicidal, make sure you take care of yourself as well. Remember that it is really stressful supporting someone who is suicidal, especially over a long period of time.

- Don't do it on your own. Find someone who you can share the load with and talk to - maybe friends, family or a professional.
- Get other people involved who can help you support the person.
- Get in touch with support groups, either mainstream or Aboriginal. Ask at your local Aboriginal or mainstream Health Centre to find out what's available in your area.
- Take time out for yourself.

## 9. What not to do:

- Don't ignore the situation and hope it will go away - if you don't think you can cope with helping the person, find someone else who can
- Don't think you can fix things on your own
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Don't make the person feel shame.

If you think someone is thinking about suicide,  
now is the time to get them help. Don't just think  
they'll get over it without some help...

Getting that person help may be what saves their life.



## 10. Staying involved:

Thoughts about suicide do not go away unless the person experiences some sort of change in their situation. The ongoing involvement of family, friends and professionals is very important as it takes time for therapy and/or medication to take effect. To make sure the person gets the best help possible:

- Make sure the person has 24-hour access to some form of support. This may be you, other family members, friends, an elder, health professionals, or Lifeline 13 11 14
- Check the person has a follow-up appointment and the name of the health professional who will be available to answer any questions.
- Go with the person to appointments if possible. This can make them feel more at ease, as well as make sure they attend sessions.
- If you are the person's carer, make sure all your questions and concerns are answered by the health professionals responsible for the person's treatment. You may know the person better than they do, so your opinion and input is important.
- Sometimes a service or health professional may not be able to meet all the person's needs. They should then help them access other appropriate services. If you think that not enough is being done to help the suicidal person, then discuss this with the service or health professional. If you still have concerns about the conduct of the health professional or health service, contact the Health Care Complaints Commission on 1800 043 159. You can also contact other services or people listed above.

- Discuss with the person what issues or situations might trigger further suicidal behaviour. Plan how to reduce this stress and ways they can try to cope.
- Keep being supportive, but not overprotective - give the person responsibility for their own recovery.

Suicidal thoughts do not go away on their own. People need to see changes in their situation and they need help to make those changes happen. You are part of that help.



## Useful resources

### Your local Aboriginal Medical Service or Health Centre

For help finding other services, ring Lifeline 13 11 14 or visit the web site [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au).



This tool kit has been produced by the Lifeline Information Service as a public service for the Shoalhaven and Illawarra Aboriginal communities. You are welcome to reproduce it without alteration. Please contact the Information Service if you would like this tool kit to be adapted to specifically suit your community

We invite your feedback and comments at [infoservice@lifeline.org.au](mailto:infoservice@lifeline.org.au)



Prime Super is the proud sponsor of the Lifeline Information Service – your mental health and self-help resource. Prime Super is the largest not-for-profit superannuation fund dedicated to serving the needs of rural and regional Australians. For more information on Prime Super, please ring 1800 675 839 or visit their website [www.primesuper.com.au](http://www.primesuper.com.au) Lifeline and Prime Super are working in partnership to promote mental health awareness, help-seeking and suicide prevention.



The assistance of the Illawarra Institute for Mental Health in producing this health promotion resource is gratefully acknowledged.

Illawarra/Shoalhaven Aboriginal  
Mental Health Advisory Committee