

Resource Series

Suicide Intervention

Depression and anxiety are common among students. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young adults between the ages of 15 and 25. Some suicide warning signs are demonstrated by some young adults who then proceed to attempt suicide.

Identification: Suicide Warning Signs

A Student might:

- ▶ Demonstrate persistent mood swings.
- ▶ Neglect to take care of their physical appearance.
- ▶ Complain about physical problems, such as headaches.
- ▶ Get in trouble with the law.
- ▶ Write poems or make drawings about death.
- ▶ Show a drop in grades, have frequent absences from school or drop out of activities.

A Student might say:

- ▶ “I think I’ll just end it all” and talk openly about committing suicide.
- ▶ “What would it be like to just die?” or ask questions about suicide.
- ▶ “I won’t be around, so it doesn’t matter what I think” and other statements about not being here in the future.
- ▶ Negative things about self and express self-blame and guilt.
- ▶ “Life isn’t fun anymore” and other statements about how things that used to be fun aren’t any longer.

A Student might feel:

- ▶ Depressed and apathetic
- ▶ Irritable, restless, stressed
- ▶ Tired, hopeless, helpless
- ▶ Like a failure or worthless
- ▶ Out of control

A student might have experienced:

- ▶ Losing a friend or relative to death, divorce, separation, or moving away
- ▶ Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- ▶ Poor marks or course failure
- ▶ The end of a relationship
- ▶ The loss of a job
- ▶ The loss of a child or close family member
- ▶ A previous suicide attempt

Response: How Do I Respond?

Suicide experts have said that the best information for a person in crisis is: “The suicide crisis is temporary. Unbearable pain can be survived. Help is available. You are not alone.”

Don’t be afraid to ask someone if they are considering harming themselves. They will let you know either way. The situation will be clear then and your response will be more appropriate. Asking does not give someone the idea.

When you talk to someone who is displaying suicide warning signs or whom you think might be at risk:

- Stay calm and listen. Don't panic.
- Take the situation seriously. Don't ignore the situation.
- Let them talk about their feelings. Don't act shocked or embarrassed.
- Be accepting. Do not judge. Don't debate the morality of suicide.
- Talk openly. Ask direct questions. Don't give advice.
- Hear what they are saying. Don't tell the person to be grateful for what they have.
- Offer realistic hope. Don't say, "Everything will be all right."
- Be firm about your intention to help even if the person is being resistant.
- Don't challenge the person to go ahead.
- Stay with the person if the risk of suicide is high.
- Talking to someone who is suicidal can be very stressful. Debrief with a counselor afterwards.

Referral: Where Can I Get Help For My Friend?

Contact a Counselor by phone or in person:

Student Services
Building 200
Vancouver Island University
Nanaimo Campus
(250) 740-6416

If a Counselor is not available, then contact::

- Doctor or family physician
- Family member(s)
- **Nanaimo Crisis Line, (250) 754-4447**
- Hospital Emergency—have a family member, friend or police accompany you to the hospital.