

Step by Step

Information for parents

The tragedy of someone dying can have devastating impact on family, friends and the community

If there has been an unexplained death or apparent suicide in your child's school, you may be concerned about your child, in particular, about their emotional health. This leaflet aims to give you some information about supporting your child and alleviating some of your anxiety.

How can I help my child?

Do listen carefully to what they say, and ask about how they feel. Give them time and space to talk about what has happened. Following a suicide it is normal to feel shock, anger and guilt. Your child is likely to feel bewildered and confused by events and will possibly search for reasons why someone took their own life.

Try to be accepting and open-minded. Let your child know you are there for them, and reassure them that they are loved. Assure them that it's okay to talk about their distress, and remind them that they have your support.

Offer to lend a hand in getting them help by contacting Samaritans, a GP, counsellor, or therapist.

Try to not to take it too personally if your son or daughter cannot talk to you because you are too close to them. Try to be accepting and open minded, your child may feel vulnerable and upset; they may also want to engage in every day, fun activities with their friends.

Events – there may be ceremonies held for the person who died. to mark the death. Your child may or may not wish to participate and may need your explanations of what might happen, what to expect and they may wish you to accompany them. Ask them what they feel comfortable about doing and support their decisions.

Try to understand your own feelings. Be honest with yourself about how your daughter or son's distress is affecting you. It's not unusual to feel hurt, devastated, shocked, angry, sad, frightened, guilty, responsible, hopeless, or powerless. It's not easy knowing that a loved one is hurting, and it might be worth considering calling Samaritans or seeing a counsellor for yourself if you are struggling to cope with strong emotions, or feel in need of support. It's also ok



Where can I go for support and information?

Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, we're here to help 24 hours a day – in confidence and without judging.

Tel: 08457 90 90 90(UK) or 1850 60 90 90 (ROI)

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Write to: Chris, PO Box 90 90, Stirling FK8 2SA

Web: www.samaritans.org

Visit us in person – find your nearest branch on our website

For more information on suicide and self-harm, visit the schools resources section of Samaritans' website – from the home page go to In your community>Supporting Schools

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Through the BACP you can find information about counsellors in your area. If you want to be referred to a counsellor you may want to discuss this with your GP. See the website or send a A5 SAE for details of local practitioners to the address below.

Address: BACP House, 35–37 Albert Street, Rugby CV21 2SG Tel: 0870 443 5252

Web: www.bacp.co.uk

Childline

Childline provides support services for children and young people. Phone the free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK about any problem, at any time – day or night.

Tel: 0800 1111

Web: www.childline.org.uk

Are there warning signs that someone is suicidal?

It is very difficult to tell if someone is suicidal, as people in crisis have unique feelings and behave in different ways. Behaviour which is unusual for someone, such as being very withdrawn or excessively animated, can be a sign that there is something wrong. On the other hand, some people show very positive behaviour such as happiness or relief once they have decided to take their own life.

Other possible signs are:

- Talking specifically about taking their own life
- talking of tidying up their affairs
- Expressing feelings of despair and failure.

Signs of despair and distress could also be:

- Not wanting to talk with or be with people
- show anger or impatience towards people close to them.
- being close to tears

- not being able to cope with small everyday events

Why do people including children and young people take their lives?

Suicide is a very complex issue and there is often no one reason why people take their own lives. Young people who take their lives have often experienced difficulties building up over a long period of time to the point where they can see no other way to cope with what they are experiencing. However, it is easy to make assumptions about why people become suicidal and how they can be best supported.

It is best to take an open minded approach and try to accept that there may never be answers to the question of why?

The following things may increase the risk of suicide:

- Recent loss
- The break-up of a close relationship.
- An actual and/or expected change in circumstances.
- Painful and/or disabling physical illness.
- Abuse of alcohol or other drugs.
- History of earlier suicide attempts or self-harm.
- Previous suicide in the family.
- Depression.

What should I do if I know someone who is feeling suicidal?

- If someone is talking about suicidal thoughts and feelings always take it seriously.
- Talking about feelings can make all the difference between choosing to live or die.
- Ask the person how they are feeling and listen to the answer. Offer support and encourage them to talk if you can. Ask direct questions and don't be afraid of frank discussions.
- Encourage them to seek emotional support and talk to someone they trust.
- Supporting someone in distress can be very difficult for you too. If you're helping someone who feels suicidal please take care of yourself as well. If you need to talk about how you are feeling, you can contact Samaritans at any time.



Whatever you're going through, whether it's big or small, don't bottle it up.

We are here for you if you're worried about something,

feel upset or confused, or just want to talk to someone.

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day – in confidence and without judging.

You can contact us by:

Calling us on 08457 90 90 90 in the UK

1850 60 90 90* in the ROI

Emailing us at jo@samaritans.org

Writing to us at Chris, P.O Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA

Visiting your local branch- find the details on our website,

www.samaritans.org

** Please see our website for latest call charges*