



# Detecting Suicidal Thoughts

# What is Suicide & Suicidal Ideation ?

## **Suicide:**

The intentional act of ending one's life.

## **Suicidal ideation :**

Thinking about or planning to take one's own life.

*\*Suicide attempts are not the same as deliberate self-harm, which is a self-injurious act done without suicidal intention.*

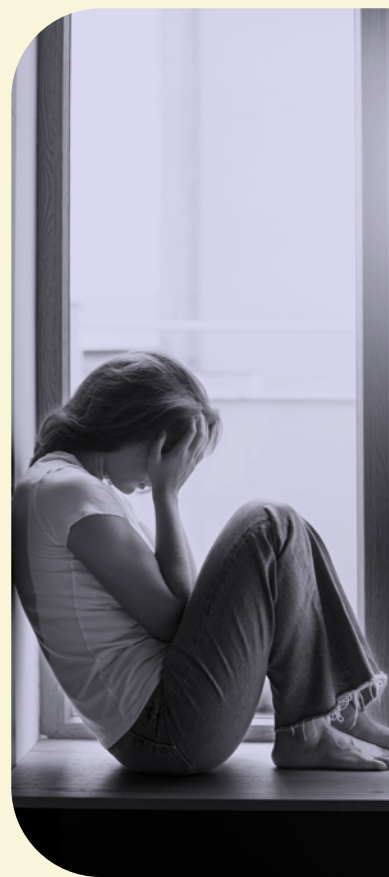
## What are some of the warning signs that someone is considering suicide?

### **Thoughts :**

Frequent expressions of worthlessness, meaninglessness, or hopelessness (e.g. *"My family will be better off without me"; "Everything is pointless"; "Nobody loves me; "I'm just a burden to everyone"*).

### **Behaviours :**

- Giving away favourite items and saying goodbye.
- Frequent talk about wanting to die.
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs.
- Making arrangements for their own death including researching suicide methods, writing suicide notes on social media/blogs/diaries, giving away personal items, asking others to look after their loved ones.



## Mood :

- Lost interest in activities they usually enjoy.
- Often irritable, sad, anxious, angry, or have extreme mood swings.

# Myths & Facts about Suicide

## Myth

There are no warning signs to suicide

Asking someone about suicide causes them to become more suicidal

Suicide is a selfish act

Suicides are a purely impulsive act

Suicidal people want to die

## Fact

These signs may not always be direct or explicit due to the stigma surrounding suicide and suicide ideation. However, they do exist and it is important to be aware of these common signs.

Talking about suicide helps the person to express what they are going through to another person and allows them to verbalise their difficulties so that they receive relevant support.

Suicides are often driven by the belief that one's existence is a burden to others and that others will be better off without them.

While impulse may have some role in suicide especially in youths who are still learning to regulate their emotions, the decision to complete suicide is often a deliberate one which is planned over time.

Suicidal ideation ranges in severity from having a vague wish of dying to having a specific plan and intent to do so. A person with passive suicidal ideation has thoughts of ending his or her life but has neither plans nor intent to act on them. Conversely, a person who has active suicidal ideation has made such plans and intends to execute them.



# Factors that Increase a Person's Risk of Suicide

- Past suicide attempts or family history of suicide.
- History of trauma or abuse.
- History of mental health conditions and/or current mental health conditions.
- Experiencing multiple stressors over an extended period of time.
- Social isolation or exclusion.
- Alcohol or drug use.
- Lack of support system and fear of burdening others.
- Have poor coping skills.
- Old age, culmination of chronic physical illnesses and deteriorating cognition.

## How can you support someone who is feeling suicidal ?

### ➤ Look after yourself

- Look after your mental well-being, it is just as important. You need to be mentally and emotionally healthy before you can offer help to another person.
- Inform your Volunteer Manager as soon as possible if you observe any behaviors that lead to concerns regarding suicidal ideation.
- This is to ensure both you and the person who is feeling suicidal receive professional support from NuLife.

### ➤ Be attentive and empathetic

- **Talking about suicide does NOT encourage suicide attempts.** If you suspect the person is contemplating suicide, ask them direct questions (e.g. "Are you thinking about dying or taking your own life?").
- Listen without judgment. It is more likely to help the person to feel heard and understood and reduce their inclination towards suicide.

- Avoid making patronising or simplistic comments (e.g. *“Things could be worse”, “Just sleep it off”, “everyone goes through tough times”, “it’s not that bad”*).
- Do NOT tell the person that they are ‘selfish’ for not thinking about how their death would affect their family and friends. A person who is suicidal is often already struggling with guilt and shame about being a burden to others.

## ➤ Encourage them to seek professional help

- Reassure the person that help is available and that they can reach out for additional support.
- If you know and understand their immediate support system (e.g. close friends, family members, partners), offer to help rally them together to create a strong safety net for the person.
- The person may already be considering approaching a mental health / counselling professional, but may be unsure where to start. Suggest speaking to a mental health / counselling professional and refer and/or accompany them if required.

## ➤ Refer them to external support systems

- NuLife for counselling support at **6300 8706 / 9734 1560**
- Samaritans of Singapore (*an organisation dedicated to supporting individuals thinking of harming themselves*) at **1-767 (their 24-hour hotline)**
- The nearest Family Service Centre (FSC). FSCs are community-based social service providers who support individuals and families in need. You can identify the closest FSC for the person via this link:  
**(<https://www.msf.gov.sg/our-services/directories>)**
- Their respective self-help groups:
  - Chinese Development Assistance Council: **6841 4889**
  - Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura: **6359 1199**
  - Singapore Indian Development Association: **1800 295 3333**
  - Eurasian Community Fund: **6447 1578**
- Institute of Mental Health at **6389 2222 (their 24-hour hotline)**

**If there is immediate danger to the person’s life:** alert Emergency Services (**Police: 999; Ambulance: 995**) right away or accompany them to the Accident & Emergency room at the nearest hospital.

# Further Resources

- Proper suicide risk assessment can help ascertain the level of suicide risk and guide its management accordingly.
- Comprehensive risk assessments which include variables such as demographics, suicide history, ideations, plans and other risk factors are available.
- Multiple organisations, including hospitals, the Agency for Integrated Care and community-based agencies have established more holistic support.
- To shift mindsets and boost public education, the NCSS also launched Beyond the Label to clarify myths and address mental health stigmas.

