

Suicide Prevention

Resilience refers to a person's ability to bounce back or recover after adversity or hard times, and to be capable of building positively on these adversities¹. When a community is resilient, it can respond to crises in ways that strengthen community bonds, resources, and the community's capacity to cope².

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Quick facts

- In 2007, suicide accounted for 253 deaths in WA and 78% of these deaths were males.
- In 2007, suicide was the biggest killer of those aged between 15-44 years in WA.
- Suicide rates in Australia have tended to decline since 1997, however, suicide still accounted for more deaths than transport incidents between 1996 and 2007.
- Aboriginal men are the highest risk group for suicide in Australia³.



Preventing suicide

Around 80% of those who complete suicide communicate their intent to harm themselves through their behaviour, thoughts and feelings⁴. However, friends and family are often unaware of the warning signs until it is too late.

Some warning signs are:

- Sudden changes in their usual pattern of relating to others e.g. withdrawing from friends and family, displaying violent or disruptive behaviour or conflict in relationships.
- Changes that suggest depression or other mental health problems.

- Previous self harm or suicide attempts.
- Impulsive and/or dangerous behaviour such as running away or increased use of drugs.
- Making final arrangements (e.g. making a will, giving away possessions).
- Disinterest in future or expressions of having no future e.g. talk of feeling worthless, useless or hopeless.
- Making comments such as "I wish I were dead" or "I'd like to go to sleep and never wake up"⁴.

What can communities do?

Communities can assist their members to be more resilient and can also build resilience in their children and young people. Resilience depends largely on a person's sense of connectedness, belonging and empathy with others.

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Communities can promote factors that are known to build resilience against suicide by:

- Teaching optimism, problem-solving and coping strategies, and help seeking behaviours via schools, family and community.
- Fostering a sense of connectedness and belonging by promoting community and social participation – especially with those that might feel excluded from the community (eg. a personal invitation to join your club or group).
- Offering help when it is needed, or helping others to seek help and access services.
- Participating in suicide prevention education and awareness raising.
- Working together to identify issues and then acting together to make improvements in their community⁴.

What you can do if you believe someone is at risk

1. Listen

Hear what they are saying without judging, criticising, advising or arguing. Take their concerns seriously.

2. Talk with them

Tell them that you care, that they are not alone. Build trust and understanding.

3. Ask them

Ask them if they are thinking about harming or killing themselves. This will NOT increase the likelihood of them doing so.

4. Offer support

Offer to support them to find solutions and encourage them to seek help.

5. Stay calm but TAKE ACTION

If there is immediate danger, get someone to stay with them; try to remove things they could use to harm themselves; seek professional help for the person (and support for yourself) from one of the below help lines⁴.

Information and support

Lifeline: 13 11 14 (AUS) or online at <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800

Rural Link: 1800 552 002 (Operates 4.30pm – 8:30am Monday to Friday and 24 hours Saturday, Sunday and public holidays)

Beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 or online at www.beyondblue.org.au

Crisis Care: 08 9223 1111 or Freecall: 1800 199 008

The Samaritans: 08 9381 5555 or Freecall: 1800 198 313

Mental Health Emergency Response Line: 1300 555 788 OR (Rural WA) 1800 676 822

Translating and Interpreting Service: 13 14 50 (AUS)

Men's Line Australia: 1300 78 99 78

Gay and Lesbian Community Services Counselling line: (08) 9420 7202 or 1800 184 527

For information on Act Belong Commit, a community based promotion campaign that encourages people to take action to improve their mental health and wellbeing, visit: <http://www.actbelongcommit.org.au> or contact 08 9266 1709

For information on ICCWA's suicide prevention project, Understanding and Building Resilience, visit www.iccwa.org.au or contact ICCWA on 08 9420 7212.

For more comprehensive information, refer to the *Information and Support Pack from those concerned about someone who is distressed or suicidal*, which is downloadable from the website: www.childrenandyoungth.wa.gov.au

References

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2. Chenoweth & Stehlik cited in Healy, Hampshire & Ayres 2003, *Engaging communities for sustainable change: promoting resilience*, Integrated Learning Network Consultative Policy Development Conference, Canberra, <<http://www.bensoc.org.au/uploads/documents/engaging-communities-for-sustainable-change-Aug03.pdf>>.
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009, *Causes of death: Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 3303.0, ABS, Canberra, <[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/D372DADC3BC75355CA25757C00135393/\\$File/3303.0_6%20Underlying%20cause%20of%20death%20\(Western%20Australia\).xls](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/D372DADC3BC75355CA25757C00135393/$File/3303.0_6%20Underlying%20cause%20of%20death%20(Western%20Australia).xls)>.
4. Miller, KM, Sayers, M, Jones, J, Follett, D & Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention 2005, *Information and support pack for those concerned about someone who is distressed or suicidal*, edited by F Lander, Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention, Perth, <<http://www.mcsp.org.au/files/user3/cover.pdf>>.

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