

## Suicide Risk

The main thing to remember is suicide ideation can occur when a person feels that they are no longer able to cope with an overwhelming situation. Many young people keep their thoughts and feelings a secret, which means that parents don't always realise that there is anything wrong.

It is crucial for parents to display a level of empathy so that your sons and daughters feel supported throughout the overwhelming experience of feeling suicidal. Listen to them when they appear upset or withdrawn and encourage them to talk about their worries. One way to clarify the intention of risk is to ask them where on the suicidal scale from 0 (feeling a bit low) to 10 (feeling extremely suicidal) they see themselves. That should pave the way for further discussion.

I encourage parents to look up forums and Internet sites their adolescents are accessing and discuss with your adolescent which ones are helpful and the ones which appear dangerous, and make sure all medicines are out of sight. Listed below are some warning signs which may help you to recognise suicidal intentions in someone you care for:

- Being preoccupied with dying, suicide or death.
- Having different mood shifts, either happy or sad.
- Talking about revenge, guilt, or shame.
- Changes in personality, or sleep patterns.
- Increasing the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Getting hold of a gun or substances that could end their life.
- Experiencing depression, panic attacks, or displaying a heightened state of anxiety.
- Isolating themselves and saying goodbye to others as though it were the last time.
- Talking about being a burden to others or expressing a regret about ever being born.
- Expressing severe remorse and self-criticism.
- Leaving a note or posting about suicide on social media sites.
- Being associated with someone who has completed suicide.
- Having previously attempted suicide.
- Exposure to graphic accounts of suicide.

I realise that some parents may feel overwhelmed at the different warning signs that you need to recognise. Try to encourage them when feeling suicidal to deter from thinking about the future, and just focus on what is going on in the here and now.

Discuss with them that if they are ever alone when they are feeling suicidal, they should get themselves to a safe place (a friend's house or home), or to be around other people. Alternatively, they can call one of the helpline numbers such as the Samaritans on 116 123, or the NSPCC on 0800 800 5000.

I advise that if you are looking after someone who displays suicidal intentions you can refer them to your GP for an emergency appointment, or call 111 for out of hours, or go to your A&E department. If you cannot get to a hospital, call 999 for an ambulance.