

PATIENT EDUCATION — MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

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# Suicide Prevention

## *A Guide for Everyone*

How to recognise warning signs, help a loved one, and save a life — you don't need to be a doctor

**If someone is in immediate danger — call 112 (Emergency) right now.**

Vandrevala Foundation: 1860-2662-345 (24x7 free) | iCall (TISS): 9152987821 | Snehi India: 044-24640050

Suicide is a **preventable public health crisis**. Most people who die by suicide showed warning signs — and most people who survive a suicidal crisis go on to live full, meaningful lives. **Knowing what to look for and what to say can literally save a life**. You do not need professional training to help. Presence, compassion, and action are enough.

### 8 WARNING SIGNS — KNOW THESE, ACT ON EVEN ONE

#### 01 Talking About Death or Dying

Direct or indirect statements: "I wish I were dead," "Everyone would be better off without me," "I won't be a problem much longer." Take every statement seriously — there is no such thing as empty threats.

#### 02 Sudden Calm After Deep Distress

Unexpected peace or serenity in someone who has been severely depressed or agitated may mean they have made a decision. This sudden calm is a critical — and often missed — warning sign.

#### 03 Giving Away Prized Possessions

Distributing valued items — jewellery, money, devices, meaningful objects — to friends or family without an obvious reason. Often a form of "putting affairs in order."

#### 04 Withdrawal & Isolation

Progressively pulling away from family, friends, and activities they previously loved. Avoiding calls, messages, and social contact. Spending increasing time alone in silence.

#### 05 Expressing Hopelessness

"Nothing will ever get better." "There is no point." A persistent, unshakeable belief that the future holds no possibility of change or relief — regardless of external circumstances.

#### 06 Researching or Acquiring Means

Searching online for methods, accessing firearms or sharp objects, stockpiling medications, or visiting locations associated with suicide. Direct, purposeful action is a high-risk sign.

#### 07 Extreme Mood Swings or Agitation

Dramatic emotional shifts — intense agitation, rage, uncontrolled crying, then sudden flatness or numbness. Particularly concerning after a major loss, rejection, or public humiliation.

#### 08 Sudden Increase in Substance Use

A sharp, uncharacteristic rise in alcohol consumption, drug use, or other substances — often a mechanism to numb unbearable emotional pain or lower inhibition before an attempt.

## RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

### FACTORS THAT INCREASE RISK

- ▲ Previous suicide attempt — the strongest single predictor
- ▲ Mental illness — depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia
- ▲ Chronic pain, terminal illness, or serious disability
- ▲ Recent major loss — job, relationship, bereavement
- ▲ Access to lethal means: firearms, large quantities of medication
- ▲ Social isolation, loneliness, and lack of belonging
- ▲ History of trauma, abuse, or childhood adversity
- ▲ Alcohol or substance dependence
- ▲ Family history of suicide

### ✓ FACTORS THAT REDUCE RISK

- ✓ Strong social support and sense of belonging
- ✓ Access to quality mental health treatment
- ✓ Clear reasons for living — children, family, purpose, faith
- ✓ Good problem-solving and emotional coping skills
- ✓ Safe storage or restriction of access to lethal means
- ✓ Cultural, religious, or spiritual beliefs that value life
- ✓ Stable housing, employment, and financial security
- ✓ Trusting, ongoing relationship with a doctor or therapist
- ✓ Connection to community and meaningful activities

**Page 1 of 2.** This guide is for educational purposes only. If someone is in crisis, seek immediate help. For appointments with Dr. Pavan Sonar: **+91 8591840141** | drpavansonar.com

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# Suicide Prevention

## *How to Help & What to Say*

Practical, evidence-based guidance for anyone who wants to help a person in crisis

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HOW TO HELP SOMEONE YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT

### Ask Directly — Don't Hint

Say: **"Are you thinking about suicide?"** Research consistently shows that asking this question directly does NOT plant the idea — it opens the door and reduces isolation. Listen fully without interrupting, minimising, or offering immediate solutions.

### Stay Present — Don't Leave Them Alone

Physical presence matters enormously. Sit with them. If it is safe to do so, quietly remove access to pills, sharp objects, weapons, or other means. Do not make a dramatic event of this — calm, practical action.

### Connect to Professional Help — Now

Call a crisis helpline together, accompany them to the nearest emergency room, or call 112. Involve other trusted family members or friends. **Do not carry the weight of this alone** — it is too heavy, and you will need support too.

### Follow Up After the Crisis

The days and weeks after a crisis are the highest-risk period. A simple message, a phone call, or a visit makes a profound difference. Studies show even brief follow-up contact significantly reduces the risk of repeat attempts.

### Keep It Confidential — But Not Secret

Respecting privacy is important, but suicidal intent must be shared with people who can help. Tell a parent, a spouse, a doctor, or call a helpline. The rule is: **keep it confidential from casual acquaintances, not from people who can help save a life.**

### Take Care of Yourself Too

Supporting someone in crisis is emotionally exhausting. Seek your own support — from a counsellor, a trusted friend, or a helpline. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and secondary trauma in caregivers is real and significant.

## WHAT TO SAY & WHAT TO AVOID

### ✓ WORDS THAT HELP

- "I'm here for you. You are not alone in this."
- "I'm worried about you. Can you tell me what you're going through?"
- "Your pain is real and it matters. Let's find help together."
- "Are you thinking about ending your life?" — ask directly and calmly.
- "You matter deeply to me. Please let me help you through this."
- "I don't fully understand, but I want to. Help me understand."

### ✗ WORDS THAT HARM

- ✗ "You're being selfish / dramatic / attention-seeking."
- ✗ "Others have it so much worse. You should be grateful."
- ✗ "Just think positive / count your blessings / pray harder."
- ✗ "Promise me you won't do it." — empty promises do not address the pain.
- ✗ "You have so much to live for!" — invalidates how they actually feel.
- ✗ Leaving them alone after they have disclosed suicidal thoughts to you.

## If you or someone you know needs help right now — these lines are available:

Emergency Services / Police

**112**

Immediate danger — call this first

Vandrevala Foundation (24 × 7)

**1860-2662-345**

Free, multilingual, trained counsellors

iCall — TISS Mumbai

**9152987821**

Call or WhatsApp — Mon–Sat, 8am–10pm

Snehi India

**044-24640050**

Chennai-based, national reach

**Disclaimer:** This guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional psychiatric evaluation or emergency care. If you or someone you know is in immediate crisis, call 112 or go to the nearest emergency room. For psychiatric consultations with Dr. Pavan Sonar: **+91 8591840141** | [drpavansonar.com](http://drpavansonar.com)

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