



Are you  
coping with  
***SUICIDAL?***  
thoughts?

*a guide for Youth*

# ***ASK YOURSELF:***

- ▷ Do you feel depressed and sad most of the time, most days?
- ▷ Do you believe no one cares about you?
- ▷ Do you feel hopeless or like a failure?
- ▷ Have you lost interest in things you used to enjoy?
- ▷ Are you losing hope that things will ever improve?
- ▷ Are you eating less?
- ▷ Do you have sleeping problems or feeling tired all the time?
- ▷ Do you often think about death?

**If this sounds like you &  
if you are thinking about  
ending your life...**

**STOP!!**

**SUICIDE IS**

**NEVER**

**THE ANSWER!**

**THERE IS**

**ALWAYS**

**A WAY OUT!!**

**WHAT  
CAN  
YOU  
DO  
?**



## **Go somewhere safe:**

- Go to a hospital emergency room.
- Call a suicide crisis line or 911.
- Tell a responsible adult or friend that you are suicidal.



## **Connect with people:**

- Talk to family or friends.
- Contact a support group.
- Visit a school counsellor or doctor.



## **Take part in stress busting activities:**

- Go for a walk or run.
- Try yoga.
- Lift weights.
- Clean your room.



## **Think about it**

- What are the good things in your life?
- There are solutions to all problems!



## **Get help:**

- Speak to your school counsellor.
- Go to your doctor or visit a health clinic.
- Go to a youth drop in center.

# ***UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS***

**Depression** – It's perfectly normal to feel sad sometimes. If your friend moves away or you fail an exam it's normal to feel low and lonely for a while. However, if your sadness persists for longer periods of time and it starts affecting your daily activities you may be clinically depressed. This is when it's a good time to talk to someone about your feelings and consider seeing the school counsellor, a doctor, a psychologist or another mental health professional.

**Grief** – If you are grieving know that it takes time and can be very painful. It's normal to experience feelings of anger, guilt and depression, but with time the pain will subside. Know that everyone goes through the stages of grief at different paces. It helps to talk to others about your feelings instead of bottling up the sadness.

**Alcohol/drug use** – Drugs and alcohol do not solve your problems. You may feel that drug and alcohol use will numb your pain for a while or give you a temporary high; however, this feeling is only short lived and when the effect wears off you may

feel worse. Plus, alcohol and drug use may lead to addiction which may increase depression and create more problems in the long run. If you feel you cannot function without alcohol or drugs it is time to seek help from a counsellor or doctor.

**Medical issues** – Learning to deal with medical problems such as cancer or HIV/AIDS can be distressing and may lead to feelings of depression and frustration. It's normal to feel angry and sad sometimes; however, it's important that you understand the illness so you can adapt and go on to lead a fulfilled life.

**Stressful events** – There are many stressful events that can make seem things hopeless at the time; such as losing a job, moving into a new neighbourhood, difficulties with friends, disagreement with parents, doing poorly academically or breaking up with a boyfriend/girlfriend. Sometimes such events may make you feel really low, but it's important to realize everyone goes through stressful events and there are healthy ways of coping.

**Know yourself** – Everyone has many different feelings and everybody responds to changes or challenges in their own way. Learn what your normal emotional responses are and be aware if they seem different.

# ***WHY SHOULDN'T I DO IT?***

## **Because death is FINAL!**

Suicide is permanent and doesn't solve anything! The troubles you are be going through are temporary and there is always a solution. Even if it may feel like things will never get better, they will. Life is full of obstacles but every time you overcome a seemingly impossible situation, you become stronger and learn from those challenges. Overcoming obstacles helps you grow and get stronger.

If you die you will be hurting many people around you. Even if you don't have many family and friends, your life does affect others. They will be left to wonder what they did wrong and why they couldn't see it coming. Your death will cause pain and guilt that could last a lifetime for these people left behind.

Think about what you wanted out of life... Realize that it's not too late to reach your goals and accomplish your dreams. There are people and organizations that can and want to help you reach your full potential. But if you die there's no turning back - and you'll be leaving behind the big 'what if' of endless possibilities!

# ***HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR FAMILY & FRIENDS***

Although right now you may feel no one really cares, people do love and care about you. If you complete suicide you will hurt many people around you and these people will be left with pain and guilt wondering what they did wrong and what they could have done differently. Often even people who are closest to you may not know what you are thinking or feeling. This is why it is important that you express your emotions and share your feelings with people who care about you so that they can help you and you won't feel so alone.

Talking about how you are feeling will help you get through difficult times. Talking will also help you better understand your feelings and how to cope, then you won't end up hurting yourself and the people around you.

# ***QUOTES FROM FAMILIES & FRIENDS LEFT BEHIND***

*“A piece of our heart is gone forever. Not knowing why he would have thought that his life was so intolerable that he couldn’t ask for help.”*

*~ Aunt of a boy who died by suicide*

*“there is not a day that goes by that I do not think of her, not a time that i do not feel the pain, and think of her loss or the family and caring people she left behind.”*

*~ friend of a teen girl who died by suicide*

*“Our lives changed forever in that minute he decided to end his life, a journey every day and a challenge to all family members.”*

*~ Uncle of a teenage boy who died by suicide*

*“it effected me profoundly, i still cry, sometimes i get upset with myself for not seeing the signs.”*

*~ co-worker of a young adult who died by suicide*

*“To try to explain the deep, wrenching pain is not possible, the hole in my heart is there forever. I will NEVER be the same person I was prior to my sons passing, I would have done anything for him had I known he was hurting so bad”*

*~ Mom of a 19 year old who died by suicide*

# ***AVOID FEELING LOW AGAIN LATER***

- **GET THE HELP YOU NEED.** Make sure you see a doctor, counsellor or therapist who you can talk to.
- **TAKE MEDICATIONS AS PRESCRIBED.**
- **AVOID ALCOHOL & DRUGS.** Alcohol and drugs are depressants that may lead to increased feelings of depression.
- **TALK TO A COUNSELLOR.** Talking to a counsellor may help you make sense of your feelings and help keep you on track.
- **LEARN POSITIVE SELF TALK.** Instead of saying: "I can't..." Say: "I'm as capable as anyone else..." Instead of saying: "I always screw up..." Say: "last time was a learning opportunity so this time I'm going to try..."
- **BECOME ASSERTIVE.** Learn to respect your self and stand up to others. Know that it's ok to disagree with others and have your own beliefs.
- **JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP.** Even if you are not comfortable sharing your feelings and experiences in a group setting, just listening to others in the group talk may help you see things from a different perspective and it may help you to open up once you see others are going through similar experiences.

- **LEARN TO PROBLEM SOLVE.** Instead of feeling helpless and giving up ask for help.
- **TRY NOT TO OVER THINK.** Try not to think too much, overanalyzing things may lead to exaggerated feelings and distress.
- **BE FLEXIBLE.** Know that you can't fix or change everything in the world – sometimes you just have to accept things and learn to adapt.
- **BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.** It's critical that you create a social network, spending too much time alone may increase your loneliness and pain.
- **SET PERSONAL GOALS:**
  - Set up a daily routine and follow it.
  - Do you want to go to university or find a good job? If so why not visit a school registrar or employment counsellor to get help.
  - Set a date for a movie you'd love to see.
  - Have you ever wanted to join a sports team? Take this opportunity to seriously look into it.
- **GET A FULL NIGHT'S REST.** It's important to get 7-8 hours of sleep a night.
- **EXERCISE REGULARLY.** Moderate exercise every day, like walking or playing a sport will help you to fight off depressive feelings.
- **EAT HEALTHY.** Eating a well balanced diet may help you feel good inside and out. Stay away from junk food and avoid too much caffeine and sugar.

# ***LEARN TO KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS***

Stressful events can be triggers that lead to feelings of depression and may also lead to suicidal thoughts. It's important to recognize what your triggers are so you can learn to cope with stressful situations and overcome obstacles. If you feel overwhelmed at times, it would be helpful to talk to a professional or share your feelings with a friend. Know that it's ok to ask for help.

*In Canada, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth aged 15-24.*

*The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that sadly every year more than 300 youth die by suicide leaving behind hundreds of loved ones to grieve.*

*It doesn't have to be this way,  
there is help available!*

# ***FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS***

## **If I go to the hospital what will happen to me?**

*If you go to the hospital when you are feeling suicidal a you will often be seen by a nurse or social worker, as well as a doctor who will talk to you and help you.*

## **What's the difference between a psychologist and a psychiatrist?**

*A **Psychologist** is a health professional who often uses talk therapy to help people overcome obstacles in their life that may be interfering with daily activities or causing great distress.*

*A **Psychiatrist** is a doctor who has gone through medical school followed by five years of training. Psychiatrists help diagnose and treat people with mental disorders through the use of medications such as antidepressants along with talk therapy.*

*Both Psychologists and Psychiatrists work in a variety of different settings such as hospitals, private practice, schools, research centers, community organizations, and government agencies. They both use a variety of treatments and collaborate with other health professionals to provide the best care possible. Social workers also provide counseling.*

## **What does treatment involve?**

*Treatment could involve the use of medications and counselling. There are also many different types of treatment programs available that could help you such as:*

### **1) In Patient Programs**

*In patient programs involve overnight stays at the hospital. The length of your stay will depend on the severity of your symptoms,*

*what you are being treated for, and how the treatment is going. It may involve in individual or group therapy sessions as well as medication. Once you are doing better you will be released from the hospital and may move on to a day treatment program if needed.*

## **2) Day Treatment Programs**

*Day Treatment Programs do not involve overnight stays at the hospital but instead you visit the hospital a number of times a week to get treatment. The number of visits varies depending on your symptoms. These types of programs help you manage your symptoms on your own so that you can deal with your every day life better. Similar to inpatient programs day treatment programs may involve individual or group counseling.*

## **3) Individual counseling**

*Individual counseling involves therapy sessions with just you and a qualified health professional. These sessions take place in either a private practice or a hospital setting. These sessions are usually about an hour once or twice a week but may be as little as once a month to every 6 months. The frequency of visits will depend on how much your symptoms are affecting your life.*

## **4) Group Sessions**

*Group sessions involve you a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist or other qualified health professionals other people who are dealing with similar problems to yours. The group discussion is lead a qualified health professional and group members are invited to speak about their personal situations or to provide support for the other members of the group. All discussions in the group are expected to remain confidential and the group sessions usually happen once a week.*

*The type of treatment you receive will be depend on your symptoms and how much they affect your life. Your symptoms may vary and while there may be no quick fix with time your problems will become more managable and you can go on to lead a healthy life.*

# ***YOUTH STORIES***

*"I have attempted suicide once and I gotta say it was not fun! It left physically broken. I actually can barely walk now. I had a gun in my hands ready and then at the last minute I dropped it but it went off when it hit the ground and I shot my own knee. It was a real wake up call for me and everyone around me. People from all over that I didn't even know wanted to help me. I had no idea my own family and neighbours cared about me, but since then I've opened my eyes to the world in a new light and I'm just grateful for another chance." ~ Ken, age 23*

*"I wanted to die when I was 19 because my boyfriend cheated on me. I was heart-broken. I thought if I died he'd regret what he did. He was my life, I thought I had nothing else to live for and no one was there for me!! So I overdosed on my mom's medications. My dad found me passed out and brought me to the hospital. They pumped my stomach and I had to explain myself to everyone, it was really scary! But then my mom confessed to me that she went through a similar experience years ago and that she was so glad she never died because she ended up falling in love and getting married a few years later to my dad! Anyway, just listening to her talk I realized that I'm not the only one who gets heart broken and noone is worth dying for!! Maybe someday I'll end up falling in love and having kids too!" ~ Leslie, age 18*

## ***MORE STORIES***

*"I was suicidal for about a year or so. I was constantly sick and no doctor could figure out what was wrong with me. I was so frustrated because I didn't look sick so I couldn't get any support from anyone. I was so alone, depressed, and in pain. I thought it was hopeless! But finally I had a doctor who listened to me and he discovered I had a rare autoimmune disease. I finally got the attention and treatment I was trying to get for so long and everyone became so supportive. I feel alive again! I am so glad I didn't commit suicide. Although I have to take medication every day I'm just glad to be better and alive." ~ Jessie, age 24*

*"I told my friend Matt I was suicidal and to keep it a secret, but he told the school counsellor. At first I was mad! I got called over the loud speaker at school to go to the counsellor's office, it was really embarrassing. The counsellor told me about a support group for suicidal youth right in our town. I told the counsellor I wasn't going to go and tell people my personal business but he insisted I go to listen to people. So I agreed to go and asked Matt to go with me. We went the following day after school and just sat there. At first I felt totally awkward until I realized I could actually relate to what these people were saying, so I opened up. Once I started talking I felt like a brick lifted off of me and people understood me. Anyway, I made some good friends with that group and continued going to their meetings for a few months. I'm no longer mad at Matt obviously because he helped save my life!" ~ Todd, age 17*

# ***HELPFUL RESOURCES***

Here are some resources with more information on suicide and how to fight off feelings of hopelessness:

## Helpful Websites:

[www.youthsuicide.ca](http://www.youthsuicide.ca)

[www.suicideinfo.ca](http://www.suicideinfo.ca)

## Support Groups:

[www.casp-acps.ca/supportgroups.asp](http://www.casp-acps.ca/supportgroups.asp)

[www.lainghouse.org](http://www.lainghouse.org)

## Crisis Lines:

Halifax Metro Helpline:

Available to residents of Metro Halifax, all ages. Offers information, referrals, lay counselling, and crisis and suicide intervention.

Halifax NS B3H 2C9

Crisis: (902) 421-1188

Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m., daily

Mental Health Mobile Crisis team

(902) 422-8167

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**For more information visit:**

**[www.teenmentalhealth.org](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org)**

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