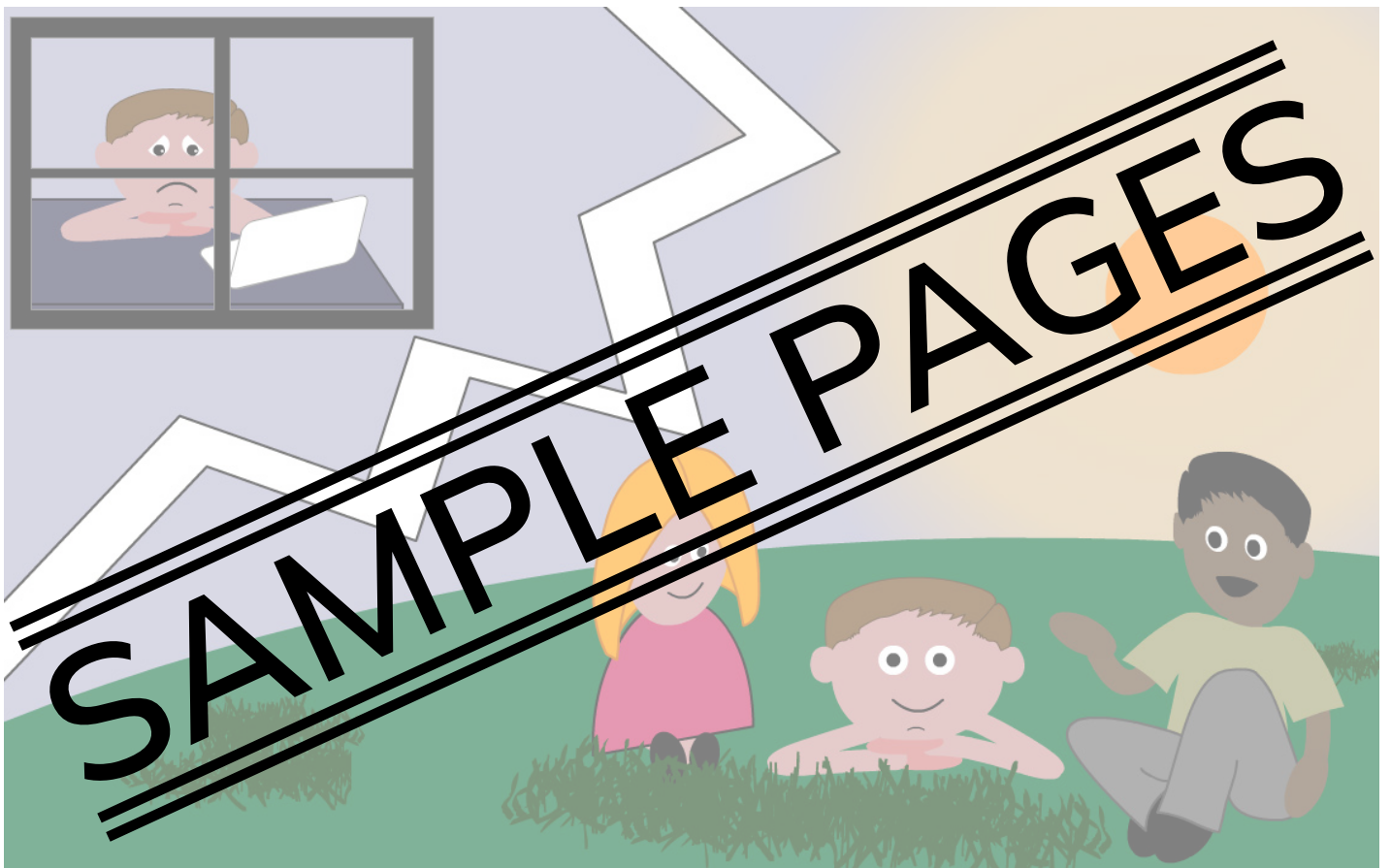


SUICIDE IS NEVER THE ANSWER



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Introduction

What is Suicide?

Suicide is, to most people, a taboo subject, nobody likes to talk about it. Yet many have either contemplated/attempted suicide or know of someone who has. When we consider the basic survival instincts of most humans, it is hard to imagine what could drive a person to want to end their own life. How does someone reach the stage where living is no longer an option? What happened to them to make them feel this way?

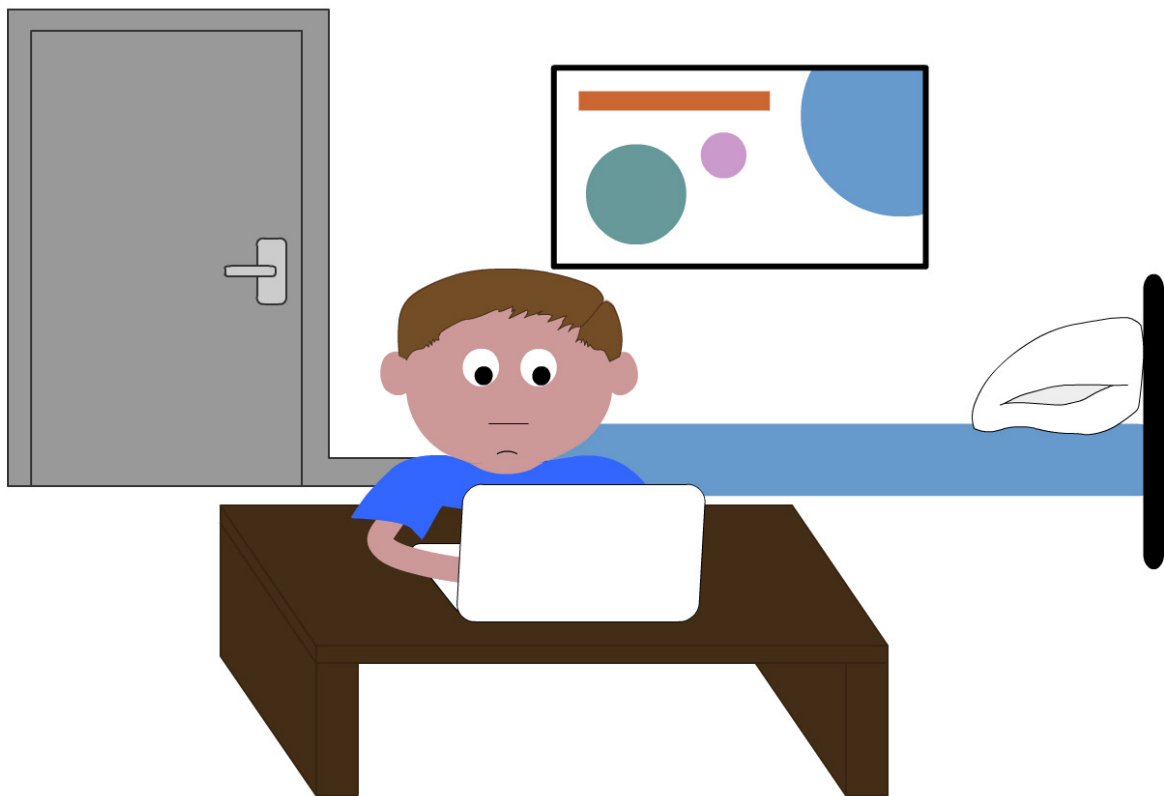
Suicide is a devastating public health issue. It wreaks despair and helplessness within families and communities and is one of the most difficult events to deal with. Historically, it has been a difficult matter to discuss because of the sensitive nature of the subject. However, it must be discussed. Suicide isn't "someone else's problem", it is "everyone's problem". We are all involved and affected by suicide.

Life can be a constant struggle. However, we all manage to cope with the day to day problems that are common to us all. When someone is feeling suicidal, the trials of life can make them feel defeated, crushed and disappointed. Even trivial things can cause great anguish and worry—and it can be difficult for the rest of us to understand this. Things can get so bad that they start to think of their options—and death may be one of them. The trouble with thinking about suicide even once is that, once the idea settles in the mind, the thought can come back again. For someone who has considered suicide in the past, when they are aware of the first sign of trouble, their mind immediately flips into “ending it all” mode. They become convinced that the world would be better off without them and they may start to plot ways they can carry out their plan.



Reasons for Suicide

The causes of suicide are many and complex, and it is not possible to identify a specific set of reasons behind all youth suicides. We know that young people have always had to cope with a variety of pressures, but young people today are facing new types of stressful situations —ones which were not an issue in the past.



One such pressure is social networking. It is a relatively new phenomenon and young people today are growing up in a world where instant information is available at the touch of a button. People today are faced with information overload and not all this information is true, helpful or healthy.

Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are growing in popularity and almost all young people have accounts with these websites. But recent studies have discovered that excessive use of social media can lead to anxiety and depression. Young people feel the need to create an online persona—they want

The Warning Signs of Suicide

“I don’t want to live anymore.” What would you do if you heard someone say these words? Would you know how to respond to them? Would you know what to do to help them?

Even though such expressions may indicate that someone is suicidal, what they are actually saying is: “I don’t want to feel like this any longer. I want this terrible pain to go away. I want to feel that life is worth living.”

One of the most devastating aspects of suicide is the feeling of helplessness felt by family and friends. Could I have done something to prevent this tragedy? What were the signs that something was wrong? Should I have realised they were feeling this way? Why didn’t they talk to me?

The truth is there is no special type of person that attempts suicide. There may be trends, but it can happen to anyone. However there are signs that someone is thinking of attempting suicide. One of the obvious signs is if they have made a suicide attempt already. People who have tried to end their lives before are significantly more likely to eventually die by suicide than the rest of the population. It will therefore be important to keep an eye on such ones and look out for any visible warning signs that they are feeling suicidal again.

One important point—sometimes a person may attempt suicide without any warning at all. The warning signs outlined here are personal and individual and it is perfectly understandable if some or all of them are missed by friends and family. Nobody should blame themselves for not noticing the signs when a loved one dies by suicide. However, research has shown that there are definite signals attached to many suicide attempts that we can all look out for and which may help us prevent a suicide and these are outlined below.

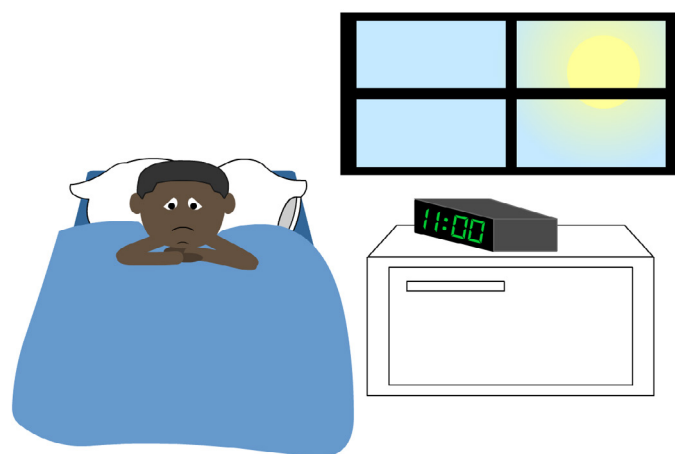
In addition to their obsession with death, they may feel detached from their surroundings—as if they are simply an observer of what is going on around them. Survivors of suicide attempts have mentioned that, at the time of their attempted suicide, they had the sensation that they were ‘standing behind’ themselves, watching what was happening as if observing a film about their life. They felt as if they had no power over events and their life was careering out of control. They wanted to apply the brakes and stop things spiraling downwards, but they didn’t know how. These new morbid interests and feelings are usually completely out of character and signal that something is not right.

Changes in Behaviour

When a young person is severely depressed and suicidal, there may be a sudden change in their behaviour. You may notice unexpected mood swings or a sudden change in personality. A young person who is usually optimistic and gregarious may become sullen, silent, and withdrawn, or even angry and abusive. As well as these noticeable changes, there are other changes in behaviour that signify they are suffering emotionally:

Sleeping Habits

You may notice a difference in their sleeping habits and they may sleep far more or less than usual. Typically a depressed teenager will sleep for hours and will seem tired even when they have had a good night’s sleep. They will complain of feeling lethargic with no energy to do anything. They may stay in their bed for long periods of time, but they may not be sleeping—this is simply a way of avoiding others. You may also find that the opposite is true—they stay awake all night, sometimes pacing up and down in their rooms or staying out all night. The important point is that their usual pattern will change and it is this that signifies there may be a problem.



Even if contact with others occurs, it is usually superficial and brief, while more meaningful, extended relationships are missing from their lives. They will make contact with others only if necessary, and their communications will get shorter and less frequent. For many young people who are suffering from depression and suicidal thoughts, they may be socially or emotionally isolated even though they want to connect with family and friends and want to engage emotionally. They may desperately want to have a strong support network, but for some reason they feel unable to make those connections because they are feeling so disconnected from others. Breaking this cycle of isolation is a difficult but necessary part of recovery from emotional distress.

Giving Away Possessions

A sign that someone is seriously considering suicide is when they start to give away treasured possessions that matter to them such as favourite DVDs, books, articles of clothing, or treasured personal items—things they would never have parted with before. Of course there may be an alternative reason for their actions—for example they may be having a clear out. However, if someone you are concerned about starts to give away cherished belongings such as sentimental mementos or other valuable items, you need to look at other aspects of their behaviour. If the person was previously very depressed and now the depression seems to have lifted, and you also notice they are giving possessions away, you may need to speak to them as it may be a sign that something is wrong.

