



Coping with thoughts of suicide

Information for youth

Many youth will have thoughts of suicide. These thoughts can range from simply wishing for the pain to end, all the way to taking steps to seriously harming themselves. People who have thoughts of suicide often struggle with distress for a long time. They consider death as one option for stopping their pain. Others might have a sudden urge when they live a moment they find difficult to accept.

When we asked youth about suicide:

Guys told us...



- 1 out of every 7 or 8 guys said they had thoughts of suicide in the past;
- About 1 in every 15 guys said they had current thoughts of suicide;
- about 1 in every 14 guys said they had attempted suicide.

(YouthNet Ottawa, 2010)

Girls told us us...



- Close to 1 out of 3 girls said they had thoughts of suicide in the in the past;
- 1 out of every 7 or 8 girls said they had current thoughts of suicide;
- A little more than 1 in 6 girls said they had attempted suicide.

(YouthNet, 2010)

Although young women are twice as likely as young men to attempt suicide, young men are 3 times as likely to die because of suicide. This is scary stuff, and needs to change. Suicide is permanent, while our pain and struggles are temporary. It's important to remember that help is out there and that **you are not alone!**

7 Ways to manage thoughts of suicide

There are many things you can do to handle these thoughts. It might be hard to imagine now, but things really can get better.

1 Breathe

This first step is often underestimated but very important. If you are having thoughts of suicide, slow down what you are doing and thinking by taking slow, deep breaths.



2 Reach out

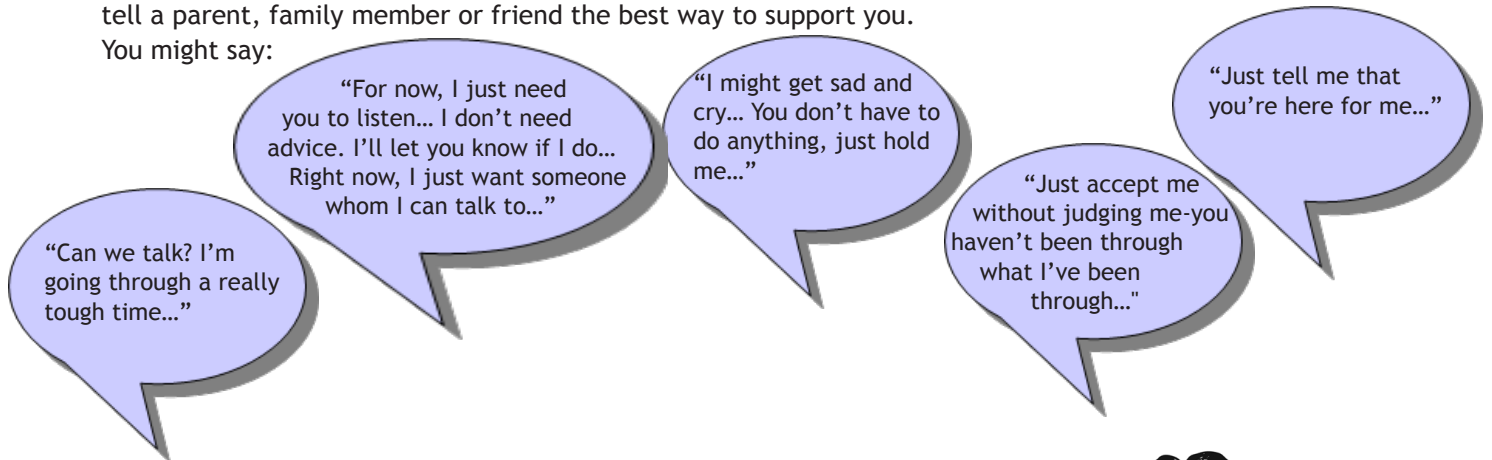
There are many ways others can support you. Telling a family member or friend what you are going through can help relieve some pressure. Knowing what type of help to ask for will make things easier. Think about people in your life who can:

- Just spend time with you, to help distract you and keep you busy (like just hanging out, going to a movie or for a walk).
- Help out with practical things like meals, laundry or going with you to the doctor.
- Listen as you share your feelings and give you emotional support.

What makes a good listener?

Good listeners listen to your feelings without judging, criticizing, or giving unwanted advice. Don't be afraid to tell a parent, family member or friend the best way to support you.

You might say:



Think about people in your life who can support you...

- Someone to spend time with to take my mind off things _____
- Someone who can help with practical things _____
- Someone who is a good listener _____



If speaking with someone face to face is hard, you could try:

- Writing a note
- E-mail
- Instant messaging
- Texting

3 Get help

If you have a hard time sharing your thoughts with someone you know, think about others with experience helping people with thoughts of suicide, like:

- Your family doctor;
- Walk-in clinics;
- Telephone support lines;
- Websites that offer online support (see the resource section for more detailed information).

4 Stay Safe

If thoughts and urges about suicide grow stronger, you can keep yourself safe by:

- Surrounding yourself with people you care about;
- Asking others to remove anything that could be harmful, or might tempt you in a difficult moment;
- Not using drugs or alcohol;
- Taking medications only as prescribed by your doctor;
- Calling a crisis line. They can give you non-judgemental support, and help you make a safety plan if you have difficulty staying safe (see the Emergency Action Plan on page 4 for phone numbers).

5 Distract yourself

When urges or thoughts appear, use distractions to help you live through the moment. These can be activities that allow you to change your thoughts, emotions and current behaviours. Make a list of the ones you like best and that help you focus all of your attention. Try one of these activities for least 30 minutes.

- Relax:** Take a bath or a shower, meditate, take a nap, get a massage, practice yoga or a mindfulness exercise.
- Physical exercise:** Anything that gets you moving like walking, running, dancing, cycling, rollerblading, swimming. Being outside is even better.
- Mental exercise:** Read, watch a movie, do a puzzle or crossword, build something, bake something.
- Connect with others:** Talk to someone, hang out with someone, go online or just go out in crowds.

How else can you distract yourself _____
when you're struggling? _____



6 Soothe yourself

Soothe yourself by doing things that make your senses happy.



- **Sound:** Listen to music you enjoy, or a CD of relaxing sounds, a podcast, or focus on complete silence.
- **Sight:** Watch a “feel good” movie or TV show, read a book, find inspirational pictures online or old pictures that make you happy, look at art you enjoy.
- **Taste:** Eat one of your favorite foods, chew gum, enjoy a lollipop, drink tea or hot chocolate, or enjoy melting chocolate in your mouth.
- **Smell:** Surround yourself with nice smells, like a favorite perfume, incense, or just the outdoors.
- **Touch:** Make yourself comfortable in your favorite PJs, hold on to your favorite stuffed animal (or real one), take a warm bath or a cool shower.

7 Build your life

You may be in a rough place right now, but it really is possible to build a life you really want to live. But you need to take this one step at a time. Ask yourself some questions first. What’s important to you? What would you hate to lose? What would you like more of in your life? Less of?

Pick something you’d like to have, develop or improve (a goal). Get support to help you reach your goal, and talk about the steps you need to take to get where you’d like to be. Some examples:

- **Relationships:** you can work on repairing them, reach out for new ones or end destructive ones. Invest in your relationship with yourself by taking care of your body and challenging negative self talk.
- **Activities or hobbies** that make you feel good and bring positive experiences. This might mean spending time on activities you’re already involved in. Or it might mean trying something new, joining a club or volunteering with a group (a great way to meet new people and make friends).
- **Religion, faith and spirituality.** Whatever our beliefs, exploring our faith or spirituality can help us find meaning and purpose in our lives.

! **Remember-** giving your body the sleep and nutrition it needs will help you handle everyday struggles better. Sleep can sometimes be difficult, but try to get into a routine that gives you at least 8 1/2 hours of sleep each night.



Emergency Action Plan

Making an emergency action plan ahead of time is helpful and will reduce stress if it is ever needed. The middle of a crisis is not the best time to be running around trying to find information or phone numbers. Add these names and numbers to your mobile phone contacts.

Names and Numbers for my health care professionals

Doctor: _____

Counsellor/therapist: _____

Others: _____

My hospital (name and phone number):

My medications, including dosages:

My pharmacy and phone number:

People I can call who I can call day or night for support (include phone #s):

Support available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- Child, Youth and Family Crisis Line for Eastern Ontario**
613-260-2360 or toll-free, 1-877-377-7775
- Kids help phone:** 1.800.668.6868 Telephone support line available 24/7/365 across Canada.
Live chat also available at www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Good2Talk:** 1-866-925-5454 A free, confidential and anonymous helpline providing professional counselling, information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being to college and university students in Ontario, 24/7/365.
- Ottawa and Region Distress Centre,** free support line available 24/7/365 for people living in the Ottawa and surrounding regions, 613-238-3311
- Youth Service Bureau 24/7 Crisis line:** 613-260-2360, free telephone support line available 24/7/365 for youth living in Ottawa.



Finding help in Ottawa

In a crisis? Child, Youth and Family Crisis Line for Eastern Ontario, 613-260-2360 or toll-free, 1-877-377-7775

Looking for mental health help? www.eMentalHealth.ca is a bilingual directory of mental health services and resources for Ottawa, Eastern Ontario and Canada.

- Youth Services Bureau**, for ages 12-20, 613-562-3004 www.ysb.on.ca
- Family Service Centre of Ottawa**, 613-725-3601, www.familyservicesottawa.org
- Catholic Family Services**, 613-233-8418, www.cfssfc-ottawa.org
- Jewish Family Services**, 613-722-2225, www.jfsottawa.com
- The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre** (by physician's referral), 613-737-7600 ext. 2496. For more information on our programs, www.cheo.on.ca
- To find a Psychologist in Ottawa:** Call the Ottawa Academy of Psychology referral service, 613-235-2529. Listing many, but not all, Ottawa psychologists, www.ottawa-psychologists.org/find.htm

Finding help in Eastern Ontario

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- Renfrew County:** Phoenix Centre for Children, Youth and Families, with offices in Renfrew and Pembroke. 613-735-2374 or toll-free 1-800-465-1870, www.renc.igs.net/~phoenix
- Leeds and Grenville County:** Children's Mental Health of Leeds and Grenville, with offices in Brockville, Elgin, Gananoque and Prescott. 613-498-4844, www.cmhlq.ca
- Lanark County:** Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth, with offices in Carleton Place, Smiths Falls and Perth. 613-283-8260, www.opendoors.on.ca
- Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and Akwesasne (Cornwall Island):** Single Point Access-for all child, youth, family and mental health services. Services in French and English. Main office, Cornwall, Ontario 613-938-9909 Toll free 1-888-286-KIDS (5437). Satellite office in Winchester.
- Cornwall and area:** Child and Youth Counselling Services (CYCS)- (Cornwall Community Hospital) provides assessment, therapy, and counseling. Services provided in English. Office in Cornwall 613-932-1558, limited outreach services in Winchester office.
- To find a psychologist anywhere in Ontario:** College of Psychologists of Ontario, 1-800-489-8388, www.cpo.on.ca



SUPPORT

Youthnet is a mental health promotion program by youth, for youth. Offers art, snowboarding, hiking and yoga programs for youth. www.youthnet.on.ca

Authors: Reviewed by the Mental Health Information Committee at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). Thanks to YouthNet's Youth Advisory Committee (YAC-CHEO) for reviewing and providing feedback to this fact sheet!

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Disclaimer: Information in this fact sheet may or may not apply to you. Your health care provider is the best source of information about your health.

Want more information?

Websites

- www.mindyourmind.ca
- www.keltymentalhealth.ca
- www.teenmentalhealth.org
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- www.headspace.org.au/
- www.au.reachout.com/
- www.yourlifecounts.org/

