

- Let the person know that you are worried about them.
- Listen and show that you understand how distressed they are.
- Ask if the person is thinking about committing suicide, and if they are, try to find out how, where and when they intend to do so. The clearer the person's plan, the faster and more determinedly you will have to work to get them help.
- Support the person in their search for solutions rather than trying to do it for them, and respect your own limits as well.
- Encourage the person to get help and go with them if they need to be accompanied.
- Get the information and support you need yourself in order to be better equipped to help.

N.B. Keeping the person's plans secret means taking the risk that possibilities for intervention will be limited and bearing all the responsibility for the person's well-being on your own shoulders. It is important, however, to be discreet as you seek help, out of respect for the person who is suffering.

It may be that you feel unable to act. If so, make sure someone else does. And in any event, never be the only one to intervene.

To get help (for people who are considering suicide, their family or friends, or for those who are grieving someone who has committed suicide), call your suicide prevention resource.



Help FOR LIFE

You can talk to someone who works in suicide prevention anytime, in most regions of Québec, by calling this toll-free number:

1-866-APPELLE
(2 7 7 - 3 5 5 3)

Other resources are also available:

- CLSCs
- Crisis centres
- Physicians or psychiatrists
- Psychologists or other health-care professionals

This pamphlet was produced in cooperation with the groupe de travail MSSS-Régies sur la prévention de suicide and the Association québécoise de suicidologie.

Every day in Québec, four people take their lives and about eighty people 15 years of age or older attempt **SUICIDE**. Despite the extent of the problem, suicide remains a taboo subject and one that is laden with prejudice. Each of us can contribute to suicide **PREVENTION**. This pamphlet presents information that can help make it easier to recognize a person with suicidal tendencies and to come to this person's **AID**. We must act now!

Québec 
Ministère de la Santé
et des Services sociaux

SUICIDE: FACTS AND FALSEHOODS

DO PEOPLE CONSIDERING SUICIDE REALLY WANT TO DIE?

No. In fact, people considering suicide are really ambivalent. They don't want to end their lives—they are trying to end their pain.

DOES SUICIDE COME WITHOUT WARNING?

In 80% of cases, the person gives hints or sends out messages to warn others of their intention to commit suicide. These signs, however, can be difficult to read.

IS SUICIDE AN ACT OF COURAGE OR COWARDICE?

A person who is considering suicide is neither brave nor cowardly. When life's suffering seems unbearable and a person has reached the end of their rope, it becomes difficult for them to see any other way out.

IS A PERSON WHO THREATENS TO COMMIT SUICIDE TRYING TO MANIPULATE OTHERS?

All suicidal behaviour should be seen as a sign that something is wrong and as a cry for help. Every threat of or attempt at suicide should be taken seriously. Even people who repeatedly threaten to take their own lives are suffering and need someone to intervene.



DO PEOPLE WITH SUICIDAL TENDENCIES SUFFER FROM MENTAL ILLNESS?

Suicide is a complex issue involving the interaction of several factors. While most people showing signs of suicide suffer from depression, all are experiencing great distress.

IS IT DANGEROUS TO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE TO SOMEONE YOU BELIEVE TO BE HAVING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS?

Asking a person outright if they are thinking about suicide will not put the idea into their head. On the contrary, it opens the door for them to talk about what they are going through and get help.

THE MAIN WARNING SIGNS FOR SUICIDE

The intention to commit suicide does not appear without warning. When someone is thinking about committing suicide, they usually give signs that can alert family members or close friends to their despair and about their intention. Here are some examples. We need to be vigilant!

WORDS:

DIRECT MESSAGES:

- I want to end it all.
- I'm going to kill myself.

INDIRECT MESSAGES:

- You'd be much better off without me.
- I'm useless.
- My life is a total failure.
- I'd be better off dead.
- Life isn't worth living.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS:

- Isolation, withdrawal;
- Significant changes in behaviour, irritability mood swings;
- Putting personal affairs in order;
- Boredom, indecision, lack of pleasure;
- Pronounced interest in weapons or medication;
- Giving away possessions;
- Unusual use of alcohol, drugs or medication;
- Hyperactivity or, conversely, lack of energy;
- Writing a will or good-bye letter;
- Trouble sleeping or lack of appetite;
- Loss of self-esteem;
- Neglect of personal appearance or hygiene;
- Sadness, discouragement, aggressiveness.



SUPPORTING PEOPLE WHO ARE CONSIDERING SUICIDE

In many respects we all have the human qualities necessary to come to the aid of someone with suicidal tendencies. Any one of us could be called on to help someone around us such as a friend, family member or colleague.

Here are some guidelines to help you when you intervene:

- Take the person seriously and avoid making fun of them, moralizing or daring them to go ahead with their plans.