

REACTIONS TO SUICIDE

Our own personal beliefs and feelings about suicide can influence our ability to support someone who is reaching out for help.

It is important to recognize these attitudes and assumptions that we carry because they impact our readiness to provide support in a difficult situation.



*The Suicide Awareness Council
Wellington-Dufferin is dedicated
to helping reduce suicide and
its impact on individuals,
families, and communities.*

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REACTIONS TO SUICIDE



A FEW COMMON RESPONSES

PANIC

I feel helpless in this situation. I'm not a trained crisis worker. Suicide can feel frightening, but you can help. People having suicidal thoughts reach out to others they trust or feel connected to in some way. Often suicidal feelings are short-lived. They are about ending pain. Most people do not want to die. If you can listen, remain non-judgmental and calm, you are creating an opportunity for that person to consider other options.

FEAR

What if I try to help, and they attempt suicide anyway? You can't avoid this possibility. Every person is ultimately responsible for his or her own behaviour. You may feel shock, guilt, and anger if a person takes their life. It is important to recognize that these are normal emotions of grief and loss. Talk to someone you can trust. Don't let the stigma of suicide affect you too.



ANGER

How much more am I expected to do? How could they do this to me? Feelings of intense anger may be covering up other emotions like fear or frustration about your ability to deal with suicide. Honest self-talk can help you identify what your feelings are, and will allow you to be more open to conversations about suicide.

RESENTMENT

They are just trying to get attention, and they're using me. The act of suicide is generally an act of desperation. Don't minimize the importance of suicidal feelings, even if you are feeling frustrated and resentful. Communicating suicidal thoughts is a cry for help, and must be taken seriously.

HOPELESS

If I were in that situation I would probably think about suicide too. I don't see any other choice available to them. It is important to realize what your own attitudes are about suicide, and to understand that your beliefs about a situation may not be the same as those of the person at risk.



HELPLESS

This situation is hopeless. How will I ever change their mind? Keep the focus on finding possible resources and supports that might help the person see another way out. Don't allow yourself to get lost in all the issues that brought the person to the point of thinking about suicide. Take one step at a time.

DISTRESSED

My personal beliefs make it impossible for me to help. If you feel unable to be a support because of your personal values, make sure that you find someone else who can. Do not offer to help, if you are not prepared to follow through.

CONFLICTED

If they have decided to kill themselves, nobody really has the right to stop them. This reaction can happen when you are trying to decide whether or not to get involved. Do not offer to help if you are not prepared to follow through.

