



SOS Digital - Providing Support to Students in Distress

Suicidal Tendencies

Self-Help Guide for Students



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the content, which reflects solely the opinions of its authorship. The European Commission is not responsible for the content of this publication.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS: HOW TO OVERCOME THEM WITHOUT FEELING LONELY

Do you feel you are going through a very difficult period of deep pain?

Do you think that you do not have a way out?

Are you feeling suicidal?

Having suicidal thoughts can be very distressing, it is very difficult to know what to do and how to deal with them.

You may feel very depressed or anxious, useless, lonely and not listened to, you feel you do not deserve the help of others, you feel hopeless towards the future, as if anything you can do or say would not change things.

The situation you are living in right now is unique... but thinking about suicide is not. Many people have been where you are now, sharing the same pain, feeling overwhelmed and devoiding all the hope.

You are not alone: it is human to feel that way in difficult moments, suffering overwhelms many people at certain stages of their lives, but you have professionals to turn to who will help you to overcome your problems.

Feeling like this is not a flaw in your way of being, it doesn't mean that you are going crazy, that you are too weak, or something is wrong with you. It only means that you are in more pain than you are able to deal with and that feels overwhelming and permanent.

At the moment, you feel like there's no way to solve your problems and that suicide is the only way to get rid of the pain, but it's not.

ASK FOR HELP

Even if you may feel lonely and without any support, there are many people who would like to help you during this difficult moment. Please, reach out to someone! Indeed, it is important to have someone that will listen to you with compassion and acceptance.

However, it is essential that you always consult a mental health professional and do NOT self-diagnose.

Remember!

- ✓ Thinking about suicide is not the same as putting it into practice. If you have those kinds of thoughts, ask for help.
- ✓ The pain you feel is not wrong, suicide is the wrong solution.
- ✓ Asking for help is a promise you must make to yourself.

(1) WHAT ARE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS?

According to statistics suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts are increasing more and more.

But what is suicidal thinking?

Suicidal thoughts (or suicidal ideation) refer to thinking or planning suicide. These thoughts can range from a simple momentary consideration to creating a detailed plan.

They do not include the final act of suicide.

This is often considered a taboo subject and very often people feel uncomfortable talking about it. This kind of stigma can lead to people not sharing their experiences and feeling deeply lonely.

Myths about suicide

Myth: The people with suicidal thoughts are those with mental problems.	Reality: Suicidal thoughts as well as suicide attempts indicate situations of deep pain, hopelessness and unhappiness. Although this may be due to a mental disorder, it is not always the case: many people with mental disorders do not have suicidal thoughts or behaviors.
Myth: Suicidal thoughts never go away.	Reality: Suicidal thoughts can come and go depending on how the situations and symptoms vary. These thoughts may come back, but they are not permanent and suicide is not the only possible solution.
Myth: A person at risk of suicide is determined to end his life.	Reality: People who survived suicide attempts report that they did not want to die but wanted to stop living with terrible suffering.

(2) WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS OF SUICIDAL THOUGHTS?

Some demographic factors are closely associated to an enhanced risk of suicidal thoughts, and they include: gender (male>female, age (under 25 and over 65), relationship (status divorced, single or widowed).

Some professions, such as health care jobs, are also at greater risk of suicide.

Taking into consideration specific risk factors, we can list the following:

- Family history of suicide
- Bereavement or painful separation
- Loss of job or job instability
- Limited social support and isolation
- Trauma, abuse
- Bullying
- Mental disorders

The data show that many individuals don't really want to die but find a way to stop the pain, emotional or physical.

(3) PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Let us now see what may be the factors that can protect against suicide.

If you feel lonely, if your life seems empty, if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, the most protective factor is certainly the possibility to ask for help and open up to what you are feeling.

Don't forget this, because you are important, the first protective factor is you!

Having friends and people who can listen to you: Individuals who have good social support (e.g. family, friends) have a lower risk of experiencing suicidal ideation or suicide attempts.

Having someone to take care of: e.g. for men and women, having children or being in the process of having children has proven to be a protective factor.

Don't underestimate your discomfort and ask for someone's help to deal with it before it gets too big.

(4) LEARN HOW TO COPE WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

- "If I have suicidal thoughts, what can I do?"

- "How can I stop thinking about suicide?"

No matter how much pain you feel right now, always remember that you are not alone.

Some of the most famous and admired people have been where you are right now.

Remember that no matter what your situation is, there are people who need you, places where you can make a difference, and experiences that remind you that life is worth living.

Even if you don't believe it right now.

Remember!

- ✓ **The problems are temporary, but suicide is permanent.**
- ✓ Losing your life is never the right solution no matter what challenge you are facing. And even if you don't make sense of it all.
- ✓ If you feel hopeless, you will automatically think that things can never change, but they can.
- ✓ Just because you can't see a light at the end of the tunnel doesn't mean there isn't one.
- ✓ Many people have experienced suicidal thoughts and survived, to be very grateful immediately afterwards. Try to give yourself some time for circumstances to change and the pain to decrease.

Some important steps you can follow:

1) Identify the triggers or situations that lead to feelings of despair and suicidal thoughts.

Some factors could be the anniversary of a major loss, toxic relationships, people denigrating you, etc. Try to avoid, as far as possible, anything that triggers your repetitive thoughts. If you can't do it yourself, find a professional. He/she can help you.

2) Eliminate access to methods of taking your own life

Get rid of any type of object that may be dangerous (e.g. knives or medicines) or prevent access to places that are dangerous for you.

3) If you are following a pharmacological treatment, observe it scrupulously.

You should never stop taking medication or change the dosage until your doctor or psychiatrist tells you to. Your feelings may get worse if you decide to stop taking your medicine abruptly.

4) Avoid alcohol, drugs or other substances

It may seem a strong temptation to turn to drugs or use alcohol during times of difficulty, but it will only strengthen your suicidal thoughts. It is essential to avoid these substances when you are feeling hopeless or thinking about suicide.

5) Remember that your emotions and thoughts are not fixed.

On the contrary, they change all the time. Even if today you feel totally grounded and think you'll get it over with, tomorrow you might try something else. Even if you think that these thoughts will never fade away, it's not like that: if you have the strength to undertake treatment or ask for help, you may regain new perspectives. Take one step at a time and don't act impulsively.

6) Try to open up and talk to someone, ask for help.

You should never try to handle your suicidal thoughts and feelings on your own. Ask your friends or loved ones to spend time with you. Professional help or support from those who love you can lighten the load you are carrying.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- ✓ If you are a student from UMinho please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a student from UniTrento please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a student from USC please click [here](#)
- ✓ If you are a student from AMU please click [here](#)

REFERENCES

- ✓ <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/suicidi>
- ✓ https://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/
- ✓ Centers for Disease Control. (1994) CDC recommendations for a community plan for prevention and containment of suicide clusters. Morbidity and mortality weekly report, , Suppl.: 1-12.
- ✓ Berman, A., L., Jobes, D., A. (1999). Suicide in adolescence, Edizioni Scientifiche Ma.Gi., Rome.
- ✓ Brent, D., A., Perper, J., Goldstein, C. (2002). Risk factor for adolescent suicide. A comparison of adolescent suicide victims with suicidal inpatients, Archives of General Psychiatry, 45
- ✓ Gould MS, et al. Psychopathology associated with suicidal ideation and attempts among children and adolescents. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 1999, 37(9): 915-923.
- ✓ Zenere FJ, Lazarus PJ. The decline of youth suicidal behaviour in an urban, multicultural public-school system following the introduction of a suicide prevention and intervention programme. Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior, 1997, 27(4): 387-403. WHO/MNH/MBD/00.3