

After a suicide attempt or suicidal thoughts

INFORMATION FOR WHĀNAU (FAMILY AND FRIENDS)

How will you cope after a suicide attempt?

Suicidal thoughts, feelings and actions of someone close to us may make you feel shock, disbelief, sadness, guilt, anger or fear. These can be difficult to work through, and it's not uncommon for relationships to be affected. It can be challenging to know what to do and how to cope.

Who can help?

Encourage your loved one to get professional support. Here are some options:

In an immediate emergency phone 111 and ask for police.

1737: Free phone or text 1737 for online counselling.

Healthline: Freephone 0800 611 116 to talk to a nurse.

Talk to their GP: Encourage them to contact their GP or practice nurse if they are thinking about suicide, or if they are having difficulty with issues arising from someone else's suicide attempt or death. The GP may refer them to a service for free counselling.

After-hours GPs:

- Nelson: (03) 546 8881
- Blenheim: (03) 520 6377
- Motueka: (03) 528 8866 or (03) 528 8358
- Golden Bay: (03) 525 0060
- Murchison: (03) 523 1120

LifeLine: 0800 543 354 **Youthline:** 0800 376 633

Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757

Alcohol & Drug Helpline: 0800 787 797

Gambling Helpline: 0800 654 655

Meth Help: 0800 6384 4357

Tautoko Suicide Crisis: 0508 828 865

Supporting Families in Mental Illness

Nelson: (03) 546 6090 or Blenheim: (03) 577 5491

Online therapy tools:

- www.justathought.co.nz
- www.auntydee.co.nz

Marae and cultural-based support networks, church or faith-based support networks:

- Te Piki Oranga, free counselling for Māori and Pacifica: 0800 ORANGA (0800 672 642)

Other resources:

- www.depression.org.nz
- www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/51/suicide-prevention

Understanding suicidal behaviour

Suicidal behaviour is complex. Your loved one may feel overwhelmed by their emotional pain or distress.

Suicidal thoughts may be a response to distressing events in the person's life that they don't know how to cope with.

Depression and anxiety are two of the most common risk factors for suicidal behaviour.

It is important to talk to a health professional/ clinician about what you can do to keep the person safe, and also how this is affecting you.

Keeping appointments

Family/whānau involvement helps support your person's recovery.

Following discharge from a hospital setting/emergency department, the person may still be at risk and need to be closely checked on regularly.

It is very important that people who have tried to take their life or who think about killing themselves keep their appointments with health professionals. They may not be in a position to understand the importance of this and so need your help and reminders to attend.

Make a point of finding out when appointments are. Be there to help them get there and support them there if appropriate.

Family/whānau guidelines after a suicide attempt

Look after yourself: Access help for yourself first and foremost – you don't need to do this alone.

Look out for your family/whānau: You will each have different needs. Children and young people in your family/whānau will also need support.

Go slow: Recovery takes time

Be aware of situations that may cause further stress.

Keep in touch with others: Find a support network for yourself. Find others you trust to talk to.

You can only do what you are able to do. You are not responsible for another person's actions.

Communication tips

Offer unconditional love (be there) and open discussion (just listen).

If necessary, ask for help to talk about the tough stuff. Let them talk honestly about how they think and feel. Listen without judgment and be compassionate.

They may prefer to speak with someone else – respect their choice.

Reassure them that you and others are there to be supportive and help them. Believe, acknowledge, and respect them. Be honest about any safety concerns. Be courageous and take the first step to initiate the conversation as the need arises.

Be low key: Aim for calmness.

When conflict arises: Ask for help, if necessary – involve a health professional.

Remember 'AEIOU'¹

- **A**sk 'are you thinking of suicide?'
- **E**nsure their immediate safety
- **I**dentify their problems
- **O**ffer hope, help and support
- **U**se professionals and community

¹ © Roger Shave

Safety tips

If someone is thinking about suicide as a solution to their problems, always take them seriously.

Ask the person if they have made a plan to attempt suicide. If they say yes, get help immediately.

Stay around: If the person tells you they are feeling unsafe or thinking about attempting suicide, or you think things are getting worse, don't leave them alone.

Get help: You could ask someone else to stay with them when you need to leave or need time out.

Help them avoid using alcohol and other drugs: This is a time when people need to feel supported. Alcohol and other drugs can worsen thoughts, feelings, and impulsivity.

Encourage them to develop a safety plan for themselves. Find a plan template online at www.nmdhb.govt.nz/suicideprevention

Remember: You do not hold total responsibility for the care and safety of someone else.

Making a safer environment

Remove items that someone could use to harm themselves such as sharp instruments, ropes, poisons and gas bottles or access to a car.

Lock garden sheds and garages.

Medications: Store any medications in a safe and secure place. Take any old and unwanted medications to the pharmacy.

Firearms: Safely remove any firearms from the property (request help from police).

You can only do the best you can for the person you're helping; some people may still harm themselves or attempt suicide.

For more information on how to help keep others safe from suicide, see www.nmdhb.govt.nz/suicideprevention