



# SANE Steps

## How to help when someone is suicidal

### SANE Factsheet

If you believe someone is thinking about ending their life it's natural to feel panic or even want to avoid thinking about it – however, there are a number of practical things you can do to help . . .

#### 1 Let them know you are concerned

- ⦿ Tell them that you are concerned, and that you are there to help.

#### 2 Ask if they are thinking about suicide and if they have made any plans

- ⦿ Talking about suicide will not make them take action
- ⦿ Asking shows that you care
- ⦿ Asking will help them talk about their feelings and plans – the first step to getting help.

#### 3 Take action to get help now

- ⦿ Tell them that there are other options to suicide
- ⦿ Don't agree to keep their suicidal thoughts or plans a secret
- ⦿ Don't assume they will get better without help or that they will seek help on their own.

If the person is thinking about suicide, encourage them to

- Make an appointment with a GP – offer for someone to go along with them.
- Contact a counsellor or employee assistance program, family member or friend.
- Contact a specialist Helpline for information and advice.

If a plan to end their life has been made

- Check if they are able to carry out this plan – do they have a time, place or method?
- Do what you can to keep them safe by removing access to items.
- Contact the Psychiatric Emergency Team at the local hospital and the police on 000, report that the person is suicidal, has made a plan, and you fear for their safety.

#### 4 Take care of yourself too

- ⦿ Look after yourself – it is emotionally demanding to support someone who is suicidal
- ⦿ Find someone to talk things over with – colleagues, family, friends or a Helpline.

#### Factors that increase the risk of suicide include

- ⦿ Expressing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- ⦿ Being socially isolated
- ⦿ Having a recent loss – relationship, death, job
- ⦿ Making a previous suicide attempt
- ⦿ Having a friend, family member or work colleague who has died by suicide
- ⦿ Having a mental illness
- ⦿ Behaving in a risky manner – drugs, alcohol abuse, driving recklessly.

#### How do I find out more?

SANE Australia also produces a range of easy-to-read publications and multimedia resources on mental illness. For more information about this topic see:

- ⦿ *SANE Guide to Staying Alive* - Provides practical step-by step hints and advice for dealing with suicidal thoughts and behaviour when there is mental illness.
- ⦿ *SANE Guide to Depression* - Helps people diagnosed with depression and their family and friends by explaining what it means to have depression, the treatments available and what a person can do to help themselves.
- ⦿ *SANE Guide for Families* - Explains how to handle common issues associated with being a carer such as developing a positive attitude, looking after yourself and getting help.

Use the Order Form which came with this Factsheet or visit the SANE Bookshop at [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

#### Where to call for help

- ⦿ Immediate assistance  
Police: 000. Local hospital  
Psychiatric Emergency Team
- ⦿ 24-hour crisis telephone counseling  
Lifeline: 13 11 14.  
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800.
- ⦿ Information and advice  
SANE Helpline: 1800 18 SANE (7263)  
9-5 weekdays EST.  
Request free InfoPack 24 hours.

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