

Every year, around the world, young people lose their life through suicide.

While we will never fully know the reasons behind each individual young person who suicides, we do know that most young people do not want to die – they just want the intense emotional pain that they are experiencing to stop.



This fact sheet provides information about youth suicide including who is most at risk and what are the warning signs to look out for.

## Which young people are most at risk in Australia?

According to the Women, Youth and Children's Health Service, young people in Australia who fall into one or more of the following groups are most at risk of taking their own life:

- young people living in the country
- young people living with a mental illness
- Aboriginal young people in Australia
- gay and lesbian young people

## What are some of the reasons behind youth suicide?

Like adults, most young people take their own life after experiencing intense emotional turmoil and pain. This pain is usually an accumulation of a number of experiences and events that have led to feelings of hopelessness and despair. Research by Beautrais (1996) suggests that young people who die by suicide (or attempt suicide) have usually had a life experience of social and educational disadvantage, multiple family/parental disadvantages, the development of mental health or personality difficulties and exposure to a serious life event (e.g. relationship breakdown).

These accumulative factors, along with what is known as a 'trigger' event, can lead young people to take their own life. Trigger events may include:

- a relationship ending;
- being bullied at school;
- the death or suicide of someone close, or the suicide of someone famous that the person admired;
- an argument at home;
- getting into trouble at home, at school, work or with the police;
- being abused (physically, sexually, emotionally);
- confusion over sexuality or being rejected due to sexuality;
- sometimes young people might attempt suicide when they are quite drunk or stoned because the drugs have helped them lose the fear of attempting suicide.

## What to look out for:

- Threats of suicide including talking about completing suicide, hinting at suicide or writing about suicide;
- Having a way to suicide, such as hoarding pills, having a gun or a rope;
- Previous attempts;
- Purposefully hurting themselves (self-mutilation);
- Acting dangerously - getting into risky, scary, dangerous situations such as when they are driving;
- Signs of depression including not caring how they look, angry outbursts, fighting, missing school, being irritable, sudden changes in appetite, sleep patterns or behaviour;
- Making negative comments about themselves;
- Using a lot of alcohol or other drugs;
- Giving away possessions or making a will;
- Unexplained crying;
- No interest in the future;
- Loss of interest in things the person used to enjoy;
- Talking about feeling out of control;
- Withdrawing from family and friends;
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness;
- Suddenly becoming cheerful after being really down for a long while.



## Useful resources and websites

- Understanding Youth Suicide Information Kit (WA Dept for Community Development & Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention) – <http://www.ecu.edu.au/equ/resources/docs/DCDKITUnderstandingYouthSuicide.pdf>
- LIFE (Living is For Everyone) Fact Sheets – <http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au/LIFE-Fact-sheets.html>
- <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=240&np=298&id=2061>
- [http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Youth\\_Suicide](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Youth_Suicide)

## Contact Us:

W [www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au](http://www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au)

E [admin.hopeforlife@aue.salvationarmy.org](mailto:admin.hopeforlife@aue.salvationarmy.org)

P 02 9356 2120