



# RESPONDING TO *SUICIDE*

## QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

### What to do when someone is showing signs of suicide or discloses thoughts of suicide.

*This resource is to ensure that members of the CUE community who experience suicide thoughts or behaviours, witness suicide behaviours, or are entrusted with a disclosure of suicide thoughts or behaviours, know who to contact. This encompasses students, staff, and faculty.*

#### Signs of suicide:

- Talk or threats to harm oneself
- Jokes about killing oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking or writing about death or dying

#### Less obvious signs of suicide:

- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness or feeling no sense of purpose in life
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Losing something important (relationship, career, etc.)
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky behaviours
- Increased use of substances (alcohol, drugs)
- Dramatic mood changes (including being really down and then one day seeming really happy)
- Anxiety, agitation, or uncontrolled anger
- Feelings of being trapped
- Unable to sleep or sleeping too much

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#### If you are experiencing suicide thoughts or behaviours:

- Please reach out to the Vice-President, Student Life and Learning at [vpsll@concordia.ab.ca](mailto:vpsll@concordia.ab.ca). If someone has already acted on thoughts of suicide or is about to:
- Call 9-1-1 immediately and arrange for the individual to go to the hospital. Ensure they are never left alone.

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#### If someone discloses they are having thoughts of suicide or have engaged in suicide behaviours:

- Contact the Vice-President, Student Life and Learning at [vpsll@concordia.ab.ca](mailto:vpsll@concordia.ab.ca). Immediately.
- If on campus during regular business hours, you can bring the person with thoughts of suicide to the Student Success Centre for an immediate response.
- Never promise to keep confidentiality in relation to suicide behaviours, however, only inform those who need to know.

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### **If someone you know is exhibiting signs of suicide:**

- Tell them you are concerned about them and contact the Vice-President, Student Life and Learning at [vpsll@concordia.ab.ca](mailto:vpsll@concordia.ab.ca).
- If on campus during regular business hours, you can bring the person exhibiting signs of suicide to the Student Success Centre for an immediate response.

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### **If you cannot get in contact with someone from CUE and you do not have adequate training:**

Call the Crisis Services Canada Crisis Line for support

24/7 Phone Line: 1-833-456-4566 SMS

Text: Text 'start' to 45645 from 2-10pm MT

Web: [www.crisisservicescanada.ca](http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca)

Always contact the Vice-President Student Life & Learning if you or someone else in the CUE community is thinking about suicide: [vpsll@concordia.ab.ca](mailto:vpsll@concordia.ab.ca)

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### **If you have adequate training:**

1. Explore invitations to talk about their mental health.

a) These include the signs of suicide but also extend to making sure you are both calm and in a safe environment to have a conversation, ideally one with few interruptions

2. Ask them if they are thinking of killing themselves or thinking about suicide.

a) This can be very difficult to ask but it is one of the most important steps in assisting a person. Asking this question does not increase the risk of suicide, rather it decreases the stigma, alleviates feelings of isolation, and increases support

#### **Important Reminders:**

b) Try using current and compassionate language (Die by suicide, End your life, Engaging in non-fatal suicide behaviours, Suicided)

c) Do not guilt someone into staying alive by mentioning how it will impact friends and family or how much they have going for them

3. If they say yes, ask open ended questions to keep them talking and listen empathetically to their story and answers.

a) Ask them if they have a plan, if they have what they need to carry out their plan, and if they know when they will do it

b) If they do not have a plan, take them seriously and continue to support them in getting the help they need

c) Use nonverbal communication to show you are actively listening, do not provide advice or solutions to anything they say

4. Validate their situation and how difficult and painful these feelings are for them.

5. Encourage them to reach out to available supports and, if necessary, assist them in finding supports.

a) Do not leave them alone. If you are unable to stay with them, give them contact information for people they know they can reach out to for support (friends, family, professional supports, and a suicide hotline)

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6. Take care of yourself and ensure you debrief with someone who is qualified to support you. On campus you can talk to the Vice-President, Student Life & Learning, Campus Wellness Coordinator, Housing Services Coordinator or a school counselor.

a) Debrief can also be provided through the Distress Line (24/7):

Phone: 780-482-HELP (4357)

Outside of Edmonton: 1-800-232-7288

Web: [edmonton.cmha.ca/programs-services/distress-line/](http://edmonton.cmha.ca/programs-services/distress-line/)

*Suicide can affect anyone at any time, so it is important to be prepared to help your community. Consider taking the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), safe-TALK and/or Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course to help those in your community.*

Find course details at:

[sites.google.com/concordia.ab.ca/cue-wellness/events/workshops](https://sites.google.com/concordia.ab.ca/cue-wellness/events/workshops)