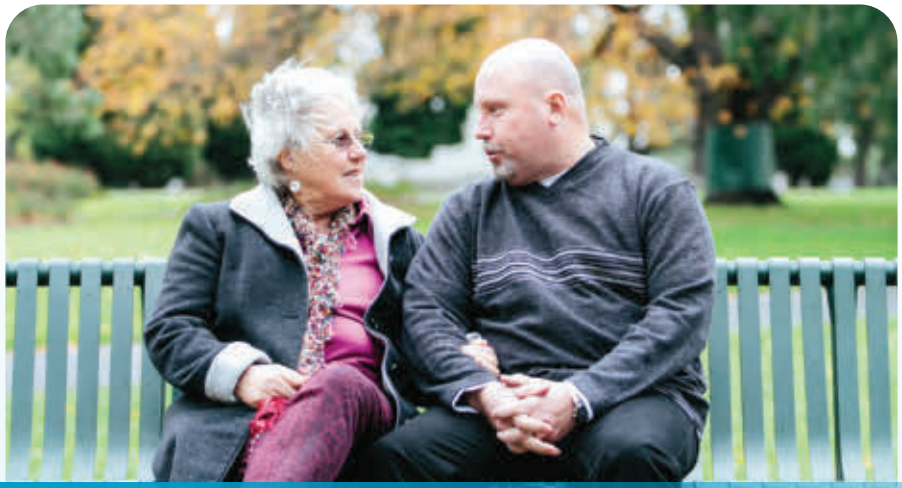
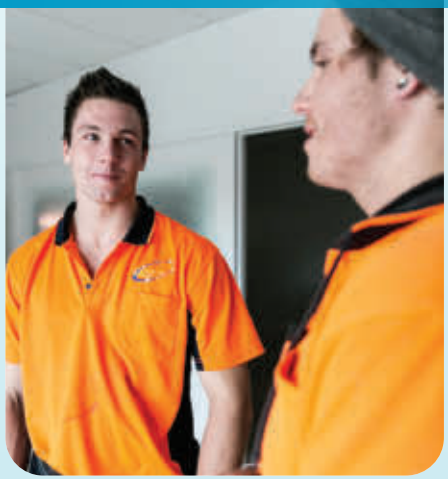
Beyond Blue



Guiding their way back

A resource for people who are supporting someone after a suicide attempt



www.beyondblue.org.au 1300 22 4636

This resource was developed with major input from many people who have attempted suicide and their family and friends; people just like you. It has been developed for ordinary, everyday people encountering the very difficult and intensely emotional time that occurs after a suicide attempt. The resource does not propose any one solution or path but provides information and thoughts based on shared experience and knowledge in the hope that your journey will be gentler and more informed.

The quotes used throughout this resource come from the people with lived experience of a suicide attempt who we spoke to in the development of the resource.

Consider the information contained in this resource in the context of contact with other professionals, don't rely on this resource in isolation.

About this resource

How this information might assist you

Having someone you care about attempt suicide can be an incredibly traumatic experience. You might respond with anger, fear or sadness. You might also find yourself asking questions; many of them beginning with why?

It is natural to have many different feelings, thoughts and concerns. You might not know what to do or what to say. This resource is a starting point for working through some of the questions that can come up after a suicide attempt.

People who have attempted suicide and their family members and friends played an important role in the development of this resource.

They described experiencing intense emotional periods following an attempt and reflected on the type of information that you may need and want when someone you care about attempts suicide.

They felt the most valuable messages to tell you first and foremost were:

- You are not alone and you can get through this.
- One of the most important things you can do for a person who has attempted suicide is to simply let them know that you love and care about them and will support them.
- By looking after yourself, you are better able to provide support to others.

Guidance on use

We encourage you to utilise the blank spaces provided throughout. Take a few minutes to note any thoughts and feelings or information that you have been provided with or sought in relevant sections. By writing it down you can refer to it later.

You may also find it useful to access other sources of information and support.

For those who have attempted suicide a resource called *Finding your way back* may be of benefit. You can find it at **www.beyondblue.org.au/thewayback**

Contents

About this resource 1

1. Providing support through the immediate response 3

2. In the short-term 9

3. Common reactions 13

4. The person who has attempted suicide 15

5. Talking about what has happened 17

6. If you are worried that they are suicidal again 24

7. Looking after yourself 26

8. The future 30

Resources and other information 31

Acknowledgments 33

1. Providing support through the immediate response

If either a family member, friend or someone you support has attempted suicide, it is important that they see a doctor or mental health worker at either a hospital or clinic to make sure their physical and mental health are both okay.

It is likely you have been given this resource by a health professional, but if you have come across it in another way, it is important that you support the person to see a medical professional as soon as possible, even if the attempt does not appear life threatening.

At the hospital

For people who have gone to the emergency department, it can be a daunting experience. The waiting, the busy environment and the lack of control over the situation can be unsettling.

At hospital, medical staff will look at physical injuries first. After these have been treated, they will then arrange for a mental health worker to come and talk to the person about what was happening before the attempt.

This assessment will look at:

- how their mood has been
- how they've been managing their day-to-day activities (e.g. work, family responsibilities)
- how their relationships have been going
- if they have been experiencing any major stresses.

'Assessment' sounds quite formal but really it is a conversation to determine what has happened, why and if any risks remain. Using this information, the health professional will provide advice about what might be helpful after a suicide attempt. This may include developing a safety plan, contacting family, friends and significant others for additional support and/or identifying what support services are available.

At the local medical clinic – seeing a General Practitioner

If the person attends a local medical clinic, the General Practitioner (GP) will discuss the situation and determine if further medical testing is required.

Once the doctor or health worker is satisfied there are no physical problems, they will talk to the person about what has been happening, what supports are available at home, and if there are any risks of further harm.

The GP might request the person returns for follow-up appointments over the coming weeks, or might refer them to a local counsellor or health service for ongoing care. See page 31 for a range of services available.

While medical treatment is happening

While health professionals are reviewing the person there are things you can do to support them.

- Avoid making judgments or asking too many questions about what has happened – sometimes sitting in silence with a person provides the comfort they need.
- Let them know you are there to listen if they want to talk.
- Provide assurance that you will be there to support them through this.
- If you need some time and space to come to terms with what has happened, excuse yourself and take the time you need to refocus. Talking with the treating health professionals might support you to understand more about what is happening.
- Offer to assist them if and when they need to provide information to health professionals and advocate for their needs where appropriate.
- If the person you support does not speak English, you may be able to assist by interpreting what is said. However, the health service can also arrange to get an interpreter.

“When you are in the middle of it, you don’t necessarily want someone to have all the answers... you just want someone to sit by you, who will keep you safe, not make any judgments, acknowledge what is happening for you and support you while you develop your own understanding.”

– Heather, 55

About confidentiality

Family members, friends and support people can help with the assessment, treatment and recovery of a person who has attempted suicide. How involved you are however, will depend upon the age of the person who has attempted suicide, the type of relationship you share with that person, their wishes in relation to maintaining their privacy and importantly, whether there is any ongoing risk that the person may hurt themselves again.

All health professionals are legally required to maintain their patient's confidentiality but there are some exceptions. These include if:

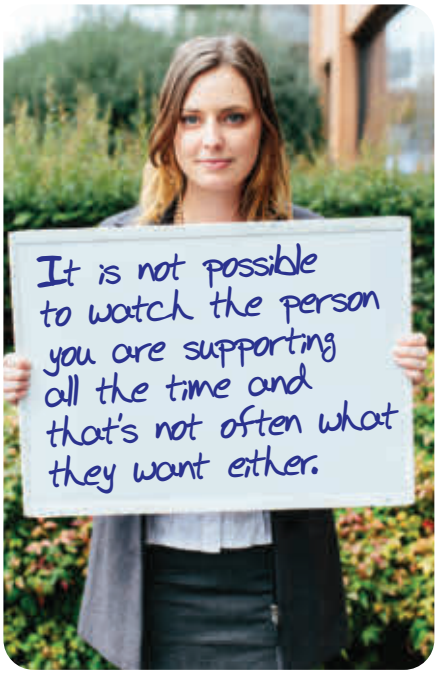
- the person has given their permission to share personal information
- they believe the person may hurt themselves or somebody else
- they are required to talk with another health professional about the person
- they are legally required to share confidential information.

If permission is not given for you to be involved you can still provide information to the health professionals, as well as ask for advice and information about your role and what to expect. Health professionals are able to provide general information and advice to you in these circumstances.

If there continues to be significant risk to the person however, the health professional can talk more openly about the situation. The focus of this conversation would then be about what can be done to support and keep the person safe.

If the person is still in your care or they are under 16 and they do not want you involved in their care, the health professional will need to work through this with them. It is likely they will have a conversation with the young person about what information needs to be shared so that family and friends can assist them in feeling supported and safe.

If you are unsure how confidentiality works in your situation simply ask the health services staff to explain it to you and the person you are supporting, so that you both understand how it works.



When getting ready to leave hospital it might be useful to know:

- Where they are planning to go. Perhaps consider making arrangements for them to stay with someone temporarily if they live alone or for someone to stay with them.
- What sort of support you can provide when they return home.
- What you should do if you are worried about them.
- What services can be contacted if you have any immediate concerns.
- Who you can contact if you would like counselling or support for yourself or others.

Before to going home

Many people are discharged from hospital after a relatively short period of time. If you feel pressure to take the person home or you do not understand why discharge is being recommended, raise your concerns with the doctor as soon as possible.

Everyone's situation is different so what people find useful after a suicide attempt can vary. Where possible people are supported in their own homes but specialised inpatient health treatment can sometimes be a better option if available.

It is not possible to watch the person you are supporting all the time and that's not often what they want either. If you feel that a very high level of support is required, it might be more appropriate for them to stay in hospital for a period of time. It is important to raise these concerns as soon as possible with the person and their doctor.

It can be useful to write down information from the health professional so that you can refer to it again later. Often it can be hard to remember things when you are tired and stressed.

RECOMMENDED SUPPORT SERVICES

Name _____ Name _____

Phone _____ Phone _____

Name _____ Name _____

Phone _____ Phone _____

Experiences with health professionals

People who have attempted suicide – and the people supporting them – have reported a range of experiences in the level of care and concern they have received from health professionals. Some have found staff to be supportive and available while others felt that the staff were distracted, unhelpful and offered little or no time to talk.

How a health professional responds to someone who has attempted suicide will depend on their personal attitude towards suicide and their level of skill in responding to suicide attempts. Time pressures within medical settings can also affect the amount of time they can spend with patients.

It is important to ask questions and talk openly about what you are worried about to ensure the health professionals understand your concerns.

All health services have systems in place for people to provide positive or negative feedback about their experience. Written information about this process is usually available from the staff or administration team. Alternatively, consider talking to the staff member involved.

“One thing that helped me when I wasn’t well, and with the pressure and guilt I put on myself for not being able to function, was what a nurse said to me, ‘If you had a broken leg and you were in hospital, would you feel that guilt about it?’ I said ‘No’. She said ‘If it stops you beating up on yourself, I can bandage your head because you have a broken head’.”

– Belinda, 35

2. In the short-term

The first few days after the suicide attempt

This can be a stressful time. Often critical issues and questions come up:

- What happens now?
- Are they OK?
- Can I trust them to stay safe?
- Will it happen again?

There are no guaranteed solutions, but there are several important things you can do to support the person as best you can.

- Let the person know that they can talk to you about things when they are ready. Be prepared to listen without interrupting.
- Assist the person to establish a routine with sleeping, meals and exercise to regain a sense of control over their life.
- Support the person to keep appointments with counsellors and other health professionals.
- Remove things in and around the house that they could potentially harm themselves with. Let them know why you are doing this and that you will return the items when it is safe to do so.
- Encourage them to keep the use of alcohol and drugs to a minimum (preferably not at all).
- If they are physically well enough to do so, offer to join them in regular exercise and physical activities or take them to places they usually enjoy, such as the beach, to lunch or to see a movie.
- Offer to gather information or resources.
- Reassure them that there is hope and they are not alone.

As you provide support to the person who has attempted suicide you should consider and respond to your own reactions and needs for support too.

Offer support

People who have attempted suicide can really benefit from the extra support of the people around them. Support can be offered in different ways and by talking with the person you can identify what would be most useful for them.

Practical support

Practical support might include taking them to appointments, being a regular exercise partner, cooking some meals or perhaps assisting with some household duties. It is also useful to encourage

them to use problem-solving and coping skills so that they can begin to consider the many different ways they could approach problems.

Assisting the person to source financial support might be useful if they are unable to return to work for a while. This can ease the stress and burden that the person may have about money.

Emotional support

Emotional support includes being available to listen, acknowledging their situation and distress, and supporting them to talk through difficult emotions or thoughts. It is also about encouraging them to seek support from professionals when times are tough or if suicidal thoughts return. It does not mean that you have to understand why they have attempted suicide, it's about your acceptance of the situation and willingness to support them in their recovery.

Support from others

It can also be useful to think about a support network for the person, rather than just relying on the one support person. Supporting someone after a suicide attempt can be exhausting, physically and emotionally, so sharing this can provide the support that the person needs, while also enabling you to look after your own wellbeing. Together you could create a list of people and the ways they can assist.

Explain your limits

No matter what support you offer it is important that the person has clear expectations about what you can do. This avoids disappointment or conflict. For example, you may want to consider whether you want to be on their 24 hour or the 'middle-of-the-night' contact list. There are 24-hour services available to provide support so this might be something that you don't need to do.

Think about what you can do in the first few days to help things settle down.

Instead, you might be someone who assists with practical tasks and makes time to listen to their concerns regularly through the week.

Encourage attendance at appointments

After a suicide attempt, people are often encouraged to link in with a health professional. This can provide the support and guidance needed for the person to begin to address the feelings or situation that triggered the attempt. It can also assist them in planning and rebuilding the sort of future they want.

Encourage the person you support to attend appointments. Try to ease their concerns, particularly if they are worried about talking about difficult things.

At a practical level you might provide transport or assist them to keep track of appointments.

> **“If I've got something wrong with my car, I'll take it to a specialist mechanic to get support with diagnosing and fixing it... suicide is very personal and you don't want to talk about it with anyone... you want to know that you can say whatever you want and that you'll be safe and protected.”**
>
> ***– Carlo, 39***

You might also ask the person whether they would find it useful for you to join at the start or end of their counselling sessions to:

- share your views about how things are going
- raise any concerns you have and get advice
- find out if there is anything more you can do to assist
- advocate for their needs.

While getting involved can be really helpful to the person you are supporting it is important to keep their privacy and wishes in mind. For more information about confidentiality and health professionals, see section 'About confidentiality' on page 5.

Finding the right health professional for the person you are supporting can take time. If the person doesn't like or feel comfortable with the health professional they have been seeing, let them know they have options. They could try a few more appointments with the current health professional and talk with them about making the sessions more useful or they might consider trying someone else.

Whatever they decide, getting the support they need is likely to be beneficial to their recovery, so they should be encouraged to keep trying until they find someone that suits them.

Support them to stay safe

It is common for thoughts about suicide and death to return. People find that their suicidal thoughts can return in response to significant stress or tension. Often the hardest time for people to manage thoughts about suicide or death is in the period immediately after a suicide attempt or after discharge from hospital.

Thoughts about death and suicide are not pleasant but the hard part is actually resisting the urge to act on them. This is a skill that people learn and become more confident with over time but can involve distraction techniques and spending time with others.

There are often signs or changes in how someone talks or behaves when they are having suicidal thoughts. By identifying what these might be you can keep a look out for them. You can also consider how you will respond if you begin to notice these signs or changes in the person that you are supporting. What will you say to them, what will you do and who else can you call?

People who have attempted suicide will often be encouraged by health professionals to prepare a safety plan. A safety plan is a series of steps that can be followed if thoughts about suicide return. If they do not already have one, encourage them to make one.

A safety plan usually includes:

- A list of the signs or signals that the person is getting stressed, overwhelmed or experiencing suicidal thoughts.
- A list of strategies they can use to get through the times when the urge to take their life is greatest.
- A list of people they can talk to when they are struggling.
- A list of professional services to contact, including 24 hour and Emergency Services.

Find out more at **www.suicideline.org.au/at-risk/how-to-make-a-suicide-safety-plan**

3. Common reactions

What you might be thinking or feeling

A suicide attempt can often come as a shock. It can be confronting and cause you to think about your own beliefs about life and death, trust, hope, love and control. For some people it can feel like their world has been turned upside down.

You may experience a range of intense and unexpected emotions that can change quickly and unpredictably.

You may feel:

- panicked
- shocked
- confused
- angered
- betrayed
- guilty
- sad.

“Because of my job for 20 years, I’ve seen a lot of trauma, but I have never experienced anything more traumatic than the time my daughter tried to take her own life.”

– Allan, 55

“At the time, I was bewildered... I felt enormously incompetent... Was it my parenting skills? Did I miss the signs? I felt somehow responsible and guilty.”

– Jen, 53

It is not uncommon to find you have endless questions about what has happened and sometimes it can feel like your questions don’t have any answers. You might find yourself thinking:

- Why didn’t they tell me they were feeling like this?
- Was there more I could have done?
- I didn’t realise they were serious.
- What am I going to tell other people?
- Does this mean they have a mental health condition?
- Did they think about how this would impact others?
- Will things ever be the same again?

People will respond differently so it is important to remember there is no right or wrong way to react.

Understanding your own reactions

It is important to be aware of your own reactions to a suicide attempt. If you have strong thoughts or feelings about the situation, consider whether you can put these aside while supporting the person. It can be hard to focus on the person's needs when you are still coming to terms with some very intense emotions yourself.

It is OK to ask someone else to provide support until you are in a better space. This does not mean that you do not care greatly for the person; it just means you might need some time to recover from the experience as well. Alternatively, you can help the person to set up a support network so the responsibility and concern is shared.

You might like to take a moment here to make some notes below.

4. The person who has attempted suicide

What they may be thinking or feeling

People who have attempted suicide can experience a range of feelings after their attempt. They might also find that these feelings are conflicting or change rapidly. While others might experience a more restricted range of feelings or describe feeling nothing.

After a suicide attempt, people may feel extreme fatigue, numbness and remorse. While others might feel embarrassed or a sense of guilt. Some people feel joy and relief while others may feel angry and quite hopeless because they have survived.

“I was just so hurt after my relationship ended that I couldn’t trust anyone... I also couldn’t risk the possibility of embarrassment or ridicule if I said anything... it’s a taboo subject.”

– Andy, 18

Why did this happen?

You may never understand why a person felt that suicide was their best option; it is likely that there was a complex range of reasons that led to the attempt. A suicide attempt is often associated with intense psychological pain along with negative feelings from which the person can see no other way through.

These overwhelming thoughts and feelings may be in response to stressful life events such as:

- feeling alone, isolated and without any friends or family
- going through a difficult relationship break-up
- losing a job
- experiencing a financial crisis
- being bullied at work or school
- experiencing discrimination and isolation due to sexuality, culture or disability
- going to court for legal matters
- experiencing drug and alcohol problems.

Some mental health conditions and medications will also increase the likelihood of experiencing intense and out of control thoughts and feelings.

It is important to note however that attempting suicide does not always mean a person has a mental health condition.

Sometimes there appears to be no obvious life events or experiences that help to explain why a person has attempted suicide.

When people were asked to reflect on their situation prior to attempting suicide they identified experiencing a range of different thoughts and feelings.

These included:

- The situation was so unbearable, I couldn't think of an alternative.
- I felt trapped. There was no other way that I could get away.
- I was just so agitated and completely on the edge all the time, I needed to do something.
- I felt totally overwhelmed and out of control.
- I needed to get support and let others know how desperate I felt.
- My thoughts were so unbearable. I couldn't endure them any longer.
- I felt like a failure and a burden. I just wanted to make it easier for those around me.
- I don't know why I did it.

Talking about the attempt

You may find that the person you support is not able to talk about why they attempted suicide, particularly straight after the attempt. They may not have the words or be ready to talk about it. If they begin to explain what happened, listen and respond without judgment.

Do your best to offer support with care and compassion. If you find it hard to understand or you disagree with their views, try to accept what has happened and move your focus to how you can now support them.

For more information about talking after a suicide attempt, see section 'Talking about what has happened' on page 17.

5. Talking about what has happened

Talking to the person

People who have attempted suicide may or may not want to talk about what has happened straight away. Sometimes, they don't have the words or they might be worried that others will judge them or think less of them. And sometimes, they feel that speaking about what has happened places a burden on others. Others may be angry and frustrated with themselves and deal with this by pushing people away.

You may find it hard to know how to start a conversation with the person about the suicide attempt or what led up to it. Many people worry that they will say the wrong thing. Letting them know you care is a good start.

A short statement like the following may be useful: "I'm so glad you are OK. You don't have to say anything, but I'm here when you are ready to talk and I want to support you to get through this".

The most important thing to do in the initial stages is to trust one another and work together to help improve the situation. You could suggest that while you don't have all the answers, you can work out a way forward together.

You may also find some of the following tips helpful.

- Listen without judging. It is likely that they are trying to deal with intense feelings ranging from anger, regret, sadness, fear and guilt. While it may be hard to understand, it is important to accept what they are saying.
- You don't need to ask probing questions about why they have done this. They will tell you when and if they are able to.
- Only ask about how they are feeling if you have the time and are emotionally ready to listen.

- If you have strong feelings or reactions about what has happened, perhaps talk them over with a trusted person or counsellor first.
- Don't avoid them because you feel uncomfortable – it can reinforce the sense of stigma. Get some ideas from counselling services about how you can communicate.
- Remember it is not just what you say, but how you say it. People notice your body language.
- If you don't know how to respond to something, be honest and say so.
- Recognise that suicide is a complex coping response to what feels like an intolerable situation.
- Support them to find solutions for themselves. Don't be dismissive or flippant about ideas or strategies they have to resolve problems. Sit with them and support them to consider the pros and cons of each one.
- Offer to find information and other resources for them.
- Be kind to yourself. A suicide attempt is emotionally draining for all involved. Make sure you keep a check on your own mood and seek support when needed.

Take some time to think about what you want to share with the person you are supporting in the first few days and what perhaps you might like to talk about when things have settled down.

Talking to others

After things have settled, it is important to talk with the person you are supporting about what to say to others. It can be useful to have a clear agreement about what should be shared and with whom. It might also be worth acknowledging that by sharing some information about what has happened, you may reduce gossip and speculation.

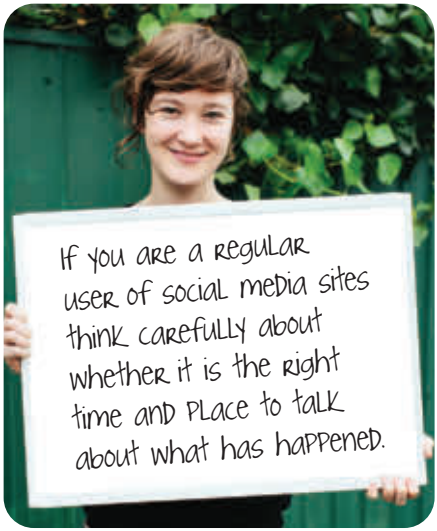
Often a short message about what has happened and how they are now coping is enough for most people.

Many people have been affected by suicide and when you are open about what has happened it gives others permission to talk about it too. Being honest creates a range of opportunities for people to be more supportive and sensitive to your needs. You do not need to reveal private or sensitive information to other people to get this support.

> **“I felt very responsible and I didn’t want to trouble other people with what is incredibly distressing news.”**
>
> ***– Candice, 31***

You may find it helpful to identify the words you want to use to let people know about what has happened and how they can support you or the person who has attempted suicide.

For example, “I need to let you know that I’ve recently had a hard time as (name of person) tried to take their own life. You do not need to be worried about me or (name of person), but I would appreciate it if you could…”.



Considerations for social media

If you are a regular user of social media sites like Facebook or Twitter think carefully about whether it is the right time and place to talk about what has happened.

While it is good to talk to others and get support, everyone is different and you might want to think about the following things first:

- It is hard to know how other people reading the messages might react – they could become upset and worried about what has happened to the person or it might bring up feelings for them that you may not know about.
- It might start other people talking about what has happened to the person before they are ready to discuss it.
- It can be harder to get private support that you and the person may need on a public forum.

Be prepared for how people may react

How people will react to being told about the attempted suicide will vary. Some people may react with concern while others may be quite challenged by the information.

For those willing to talk about it, share how you feel and seek their support. For those who are uncomfortable with the conversation acknowledge their discomfort but also explain why it is important for you to talk about it.

If it's not working for you, let them know what you need from them. For example:

- "What I need at this point is someone who can listen to me without telling me what I need to do."
- "I'd really appreciate it if we could talk about other things at the moment. I just want to get my mind off it."

"I think there is a sort of guilt factor that tends to make people not want to talk about it... they worry about what other people think – like what's been going on in that family that's led to this happening..."

– Jen, 53

Some people may be overly curious after you have started the conversation or try to offer opinions that you don't appreciate. You can respond to them by saying "I'd rather not talk about it anymore right now".

I can tell other people what has happened by saying...

I can tell other people that I do not want to discuss it any further by saying...

Planning what you might say and to whom

You may find it useful to think about the different groups of people in your life, what they can be told and why, by completing the following table.

Who	Why they should be told
Close family and friends	
Other friends	
Workplace	
Other people e.g. neighbours, sports groups, church, etc.	

What they should be told	What they should not be told

6. If you are worried that they are suicidal again

Some practical steps

If you are worried a person may be suicidal or at risk of harming themselves again, the following steps can be used to guide your response.

1. Assess the situation

Ask yourself what is making you worry. For example,

- Has their behaviour changed? Are they sleeping a lot more or a lot less? Do they have too much or too little energy? Do they seem sad? Do they have a short temper or cry more than usual?
- Has their thinking changed? Are they negative all the time or are they overly positive? Do they seem to have muddled or fuzzy thoughts? Are they unable to concentrate?
- Have their relationships changed? Have they withdrawn from family and friends?

2. Talk with a trusted friend or counsellor

Explain why you are worried and ask their opinion.

3. Have an open and frank discussion with the person

Find a time as soon as possible when you can sit down and talk without distractions.

4. Discuss any signs you have seen that have worried you

Talk to them about the things you have noticed and find out if they have also noticed any signs that indicate things are not going well for them at the moment (such as changes in mood, insomnia, withdrawal, agitation, etc.).

5. Discuss their state of mind

If you are worried that they are suicidal, ask the person calmly and directly if they have been thinking about suicide. Ask them to be honest. Some possible ways to say this include:

- "I've noticed... (state specific observations) and am worried about how you are and wondering if you have been thinking about suicide?" or perhaps
- "How have you been feeling lately? You seem to be really withdrawn and I'm worried that things are so bad that you are thinking about killing yourself."

If they tell you that they want to kill themselves or are thinking of suicide, let them know it is OK to have suicidal thoughts and that they are not alone in having them. Recognise that thoughts about ending their life are signs of the suffering and despair they are feeling. Ask them to tell you more.

6. Go back to their safety plan and decide together what action to take.

If you remain unsure what to do, stay with the person while you contact a telephone crisis support service or relevant local service to seek their advice.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Lifeline
– 24 hour crisis support
www.lifeline.org.au
13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service
www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
1300 659 467

Kids Helpline
– for 25 years and under
www.kidshelp.com.au
1800 551 800

Poison Information Service
– 24 hour advice
13 11 26

Ambulance and Police
000

Local Mental Health Service

_____

Phone _____

Local Doctor/General Practitioner

_____

Phone _____

Local Emergency Department

_____

Phone _____

Other

_____

Phone _____

7. Looking after yourself

Managing the stress

Supporting a person who has attempted suicide can be stressful and at times overwhelming. As with any other time of stress it is essential that you look after yourself emotionally and physically. Staying connected to your friends and family should also be a priority.

It's all about trying to find the right balance for you – balancing how much you can offer others while also looking after your own needs.

There may be a lot of demands on your time and energy. To ensure you remain healthy it is important to try to minimise stress.

"At first, I definitely didn't think about myself... but after a while, I realised I wasn't coping... It's like a flight when the oxygen masks go down: you have to put the mask on yourself first before you can put it on others."

– Crystal, 27

- Take regular breaks. This includes taking breaks during the day and planned times for you.
- Set boundaries on what support you can provide and for how long. If you burn out, who would provide support to those you care about?
- Ask other people for support. Many will welcome the opportunity to be useful.
- Consider speaking with your employer about what has happened and what may assist at work, such as flexible hours.
- Try to reduce the demands placed on you, even if this is temporary. Be prepared to say no to additional requests.
- Don't make any major life decisions while things are unsettled.

"If there is a place where you feel safe to talk about things, I think it's got to build your resilience and your capacity to then take those conversations to a closer level... within your own close family and friends."

– Jen, 53

Develop a support network for yourself

Finding the right mix of people to support you is a key step in looking after yourself. Think about the people you know who are trustworthy, good listeners, who you like being with and who understand you.

Some people, who have had similar experiences, have also found it helpful to link with other people in person or online.

- Catch up regularly with friends, family members and significant others.
- Identify people in your community who you trust and can talk to.

“I had a close family friend who was bereaved by suicide and I connected with a group that she was part of... Even though I had found it really hard to say anything to my family members about my son, I had no trouble sharing things with that group and I really admired the others who were so open about it... and the way they pulled together like a little community... it went a long way toward healing.”

– Jen, 53

Access support services

You may find it helpful to access a support service to talk about what has happened and to work out how you can move forward. Health professionals also understand that you need to look after yourself in order to support someone else.

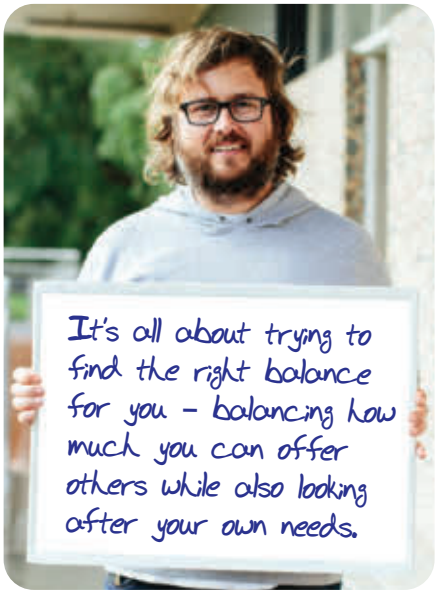
You don't need to be at crisis point to access a support service. You could have regular appointments or have an arrangement to meet or call them when times are tough or when you simply have questions that need answers.

Remember, finding the right person can take time and it is not uncommon to see several service providers before you find one that fits. If you don't relate to the first person, try to find someone else.

For a list of support services see section 'Resources and other information' on page 31.

“Your brain's trying to solve an issue that it's not able to solve and getting support – borrowing someone else's head to support you solve it – is really paramount.”

– Heather, 55



Making time for yourself

During stressful times, it's easy to overlook your own needs.

- Look for ways to include activities you enjoy within your usual routine.
- Spend time with people you like to be with.
- Remember to look for fun and to laugh.
- Stay in the moment – notice the times when you are enjoying things.

Consider your lifestyle

Your wellbeing will be affected by your lifestyle. It can be helpful to think about whether your lifestyle is supporting or hindering your capacity to cope.

- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet. Include a variety of healthy foods including plenty of vegetables, fruit and cereals, some lean meat, chicken or fish, dairy products and lots of water.
- Reduce consumption of alcohol and other drugs.
- Engage in regular exercise.
- Establish a good sleep pattern.
- Make sure relaxation is built into your routine; breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, yoga and Tai Chi can be good ways to do this.

Meaning and purpose

To help cope through difficult times work out what is important to you, do things that make you feel good.

- Get involved in activities that you feel are worthwhile and in which you feel valued.
- Make regular time for your interests and hobbies. Think about joining a group or studying something you have always been interested in.
- Consider volunteering or how you can give back to the community.
- Develop an understanding of your experiences. You may be able to do this by yourself or by talking with someone else (or a support service). You may find it helpful to connect with a church, some other spiritual pursuit or participate in creative activities in your community.
- Plan something to look forward to, such as a holiday.

Have a think about some things you could do to look after yourself.

Physical health: I could...	Mental health: I could...
Social health: I could...	**Meaning and purpose: I could...**

8. The future

After a suicide attempt it can be hard to see what the future holds. It is important to remember that there is hope for change but that change often happens slowly. There will be ups and downs but with support, the person you care about can find a way forward.

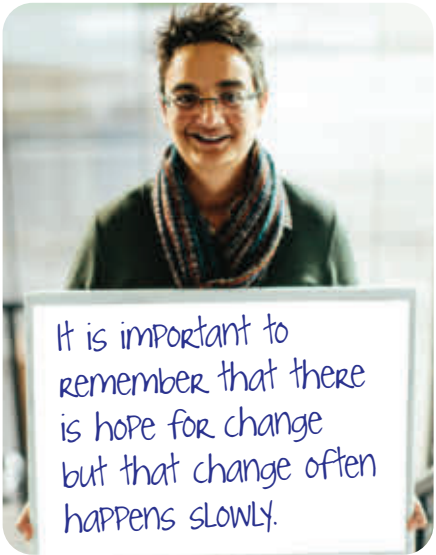
You might also find that this experience has changed your focus and priorities. You might find that you are making different decisions.

“After my suicide attempt six years ago, I kept remembering a quote from Winston Churchill: ‘When you are going through hell... just keep going.’ This gave me great faith that somehow I would find a way out. Which I did and I’m really enjoying life now.”

– Max, 54

This resource was developed to bring together the wisdom and experiences of people with a personal experience of suicide and combine it with what we know to be helpful.

We hope we have provided the best possible information to help you get through the challenges and opportunities associated with a suicide attempt.



The people involved in this project talked about suicide being a part of their past but that it was not going to define their future. They wished the same for you, that you can look to the future with a sense of hope for you and the person you are supporting.

“One of the most important things is to be able to look in the mirror and say to yourself: You will get through this... you have a few problems with this and that, but you can take a step a day towards solving them.”

– Michael, 57

Resources and other information

GENERAL

Lifeline
www.lifeline.org.au
13 11 14

Free, confidential, 24 hour telephone and online crisis support service. The website also provides a range of information.

Suicide Call Back Service
www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
1300 659 467

Free, confidential, 24 hour telephone and online counselling service for people who are suicidal and anyone wanting to talk through concerns. The website also provides a range of information and resources.

Beyond Blue
www.beyondblue.org.au
1300 22 4636

Free, 24 hour telephone information and online chat from a trained health professional. Website provides a range of information to reduce the impact of depression and anxiety in the community by raising awareness and understanding, empowering people to seek support and supporting recovery, management and resilience.

Black Dog Institute
www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

Online information and resources (including self-tests) on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder.

Living is for Everyone (LIFE) Resources
www.livingisforeveryone.com.au

The Federal Government's suicide prevention framework and supporting resources for people across the community wanting information on suicide and suicide prevention. Includes a range of fact sheets about rates of suicide in Australia, suicide warning signs and how to respond to suicidal thoughts.

Suicide Prevention Australia
www.suicidepreventionaust.org
02 9223 3333

National peak body for the suicide prevention sector in Australia. Supports communities and organisations throughout Australia, and promotes collaboration and partnerships in suicide and self-harm prevention, intervention and postvention.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 25 YEARS AND UNDER

Kids Helpline
www.kidshelp.com.au
1800 551 800

Free confidential 24 hour telephone, email and web counselling. The website also provides a range of information and resources.

ReachOut
reachout.com.au

Online forums and chat, fact sheets and videos about youth mental health issues.

headspace
www.headspace.org.au
1800 650 890

Online chat, counselling, forums and information about youth mental health issues. Face-to-face support services for young people and anyone supporting them are available at headspace centres throughout the country – check the website to find the closest one to you.

FOR CARERS AND OTHERS PROVIDING SUPPORT TO A PERSON WHO HAS ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

Carers Australia
www.carersaustralia.com.au
1800 242 636

Manages the delivery of national programs, support and services for carers across the country. This includes the Carer Advisory Service and Carer Counselling Program. It also advocates and lobbies on a wide range of issues that affect carers.

Family Drug Support – Support Line
1300 368 186

Free confidential 24 hour telephone assistance for families affected by alcohol and other drugs.

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI
www.arafmiaustralia.asn.au
1800 811 747

Provides services for people with a mental illness and their carers. It offers telephone and online information and support services for carers, as well as carer support groups in some areas. The carer support line listed above is staffed 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres
1800 052 222

Facilitates access to information, respite care and other support appropriate to carers' needs and circumstances, and the needs of the people they care for.

Acknowledgments

This resource was developed in partnership by Beyond Blue and the Hunter Institute of Mental Health. Community experts with personal experience of the impact of suicide also played a key role as part of the Project Working Group.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all stakeholders and people with personal experience, including family members and friends, who took part in the consultation process.

A special thanks to the blueVoices members who appear in many of the photos throughout.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

This is a new resource... we welcome all feedback, comments and suggestions.

Please email **suicideprevention@beyondblue.org.au**

Beyond Blue | Hunter PRIMARY CARE

Other general notes

MY CONTACTS

General Practitioner

_____

Phone _____

Mental Health Service

_____

Phone _____

Counsellor

_____

Phone _____

Other

_____

Phone _____

Other

_____

Phone _____

Other

_____

Phone _____

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Lifeline
13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467
www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Poison Information Service
13 11 26

Ambulance and Police
000

Beyond Blue
1300 22 4636
www.beyondblue.org.au

Other

_____

Phone _____

_____

Phone _____

HOPE. RECOVERY. RESILIENCE. Find out more at www.beyondblue.org.au

Where to find more information

Beyond Blue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service. Our trained mental health professionals will listen, provide information, advice and brief counselling, and point you in the right direction so you can seek further support.

1300 22 4636

Email or chat to us online at www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Head to Health

headtohealth.gov.au

Head to Health can help you find free and low-cost, trusted online and phone mental health resources.

@beyondblue @beyondblue

@beyondblueofficial ® company/beyondblue

Donate online www.beyondblue.org.au/donations

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