Life can be hard and sometimes we need some extra support to stay on track. This toolkit offers information that can be used when you or someone you know needs support to stay safe. It includes suicide warning signs, practical steps you can take to protect yourself or your loved ones, tips for talking to young people and the importance of self-care.

This resource is not intended for everyday use, but something that can be available somewhere around your home or work, for when you need it.

**Need help now?**

**If emergency help is required call 000**

Call the following numbers for free, confidential support 24/7 from trained specialist counsellors.

- **Mensline** – 1300 78 99 78
- **Lifeline** – 13 11 14
- **Kids Helpline** – 1800 55 1800 (supporting ages 5-25)
- **beyondblue** – 1300 224 636
- **AccessLine** – 1800 800 944

**Wellways Helpline** – 1300 111 500

Free, confidential advice, information and service referral from peer volunteers.

Available 9am-9pm, Monday to Friday except public holidays (*note: this is not a crisis line*).
Common signs people may need support

Those who have had or are having thoughts of suicide talk about experiencing some or all of the following:

- An extreme sense of worthlessness or of being a burden on people.
- A sense of hopelessness, that things will never change or get better.
- Withdrawing from everyone, becoming isolated and alone.
- Thinking and talking frequently about death or about ending their life.
- Taking steps towards ending their life, such as giving away possessions, saying goodbye to people, finding ways and means to act on their thoughts (medication, weapons).
- Taking increasing risks, such as excessive alcohol and drug use, or putting themselves in potentially dangerous situations.

Noticing any of these signs in yourself or observing them in others means it is time to take action to stay safe.
Thinking about suicide?

If you are thinking about suicide it is important to seek support.

Though you may be afraid of asking for help, or worried what people will think, support is readily available.

Talk to someone: reach out and tell someone you are not okay. It can be difficult to open up, but talking about what you are thinking and feeling can make a big difference.

Seek help: there are many helpful services available in the community, at school, or through work. There are supports available to you when you are in crisis and others that focus on your ongoing wellbeing and recovery.

Find strategies and ways to cope that work for you: for many people, thoughts of suicide can occur throughout their life. For others, it may be a one-off experience. Learn how to recognise who and what you need when you are feeling this way and seek them out straight away.

Have hope: it can feel like no one else understands, but many people have had thoughts about suicide or attempted suicide and survived. Taking the first steps to get help can sometimes be hard, but people do get through this and continue on to live happy and fulfilling lives.
Are you worried about someone close to you?

Steps that might help

1. **ACT NOW** – do something to let that person know you care and want to support them.

2. **Acknowledge your reactions** – learning someone close to you could be thinking about suicide can be scary. Your natural reaction may be panic, avoidance, or to look for a quick fix. Take some deep breaths, slow the situation, listen and plan.

3. **Ask if they are thinking about suicide** – this is a hard question to ask, but it may help them to know someone has noticed. Asking the ‘S’ question is the only way to know that thoughts of suicide is what you are dealing with.

4. **Be there for them** – listen to what they are feeling. Spend time and let them know you care. In times like this you need to hear them, not try to fix it. Just being there and hearing their story is most important.

5. **Enquire about safety** – ask - Have you thought about how to kill yourself? Have you attempted suicide before? What support do you need to stay safe for now? **IF YOU ARE REALLY WORRIED, DO NOT LEAVE THE PERSON ALONE** – call Lifeline 13 11 14 for further guidance or 000 for an immediate response.
6. **Decide what to do** – talk together about where to from here. Seek help from others such as a friend, family member, or a professional. Keeping them safe for now is the most important thing, until additional support can be sought.

7. **Take action** – connect with a professional such as GP, counsellor, mental health service, priest, coach, crisis supports, emergency services. Offer to support the person to make and attend an appointment.

8. **Look after yourself** – share the load with others such as friends and family. Connect with support services such as Lifeline or local services. Remember to take time out from stressors and stay connected with your community.
Talking about suicide with a young person

As a parent or a friend it can be difficult to know how to support a young person who is in emotional pain and maybe thinking about suicide. It is important to reach out and try to understand how they feel.

Suicide prevention starts with recognising the warning signs and taking them seriously, talking to young people about what is going on for them and helping them seek professional support.

It is important to understand that a young person does not want to die, but for them, they may have run out of options as a way of managing pain, dealing with stressors, or feeling overwhelmed by life.

With the right supports however, they can often overcome these stressors and find ways to manage their worries and distress.

Hints to guide your response.

1. Don’t be afraid to ask a young person if they are having thoughts of suicide, you will not put the thought in their head. Often talking about suicide sends a message that you have noticed they are not themselves and that you care. This also helps you understand what kind of support you need to provide.

Some direct ways to ask include:

- Are you feeling so sad at the moment you are thinking about taking your life?
- Are you having thoughts where you are wishing you were dead?
- Are you having thoughts about suicide?
**NEVER promise to keep suicide a secret. Make sure you tell the person you care for them, but are unable to keep this secret. They may be angry, but they will thank you later.**

2. **Listen, avoid judgement and be patient:** it can be hard to see and hear a young person in pain, but it is important that you listen and not judge. Their concerns may seem trivial to you, however remember this is how they feel. Judgement may lead to a young person shutting down. Don’t pressure people to share personal details before they’re ready, and take all of their concerns seriously. Be aware that whilst not intended, advice can be interpreted as criticism so avoid telling them what they should do, unless they ask.

3. **Get professional help:** suicidal thoughts can be hard to manage alone, so it is important to help young people seek the professional support they need. This can be scary for them so you can assist by accompanying them to appointments, guiding them and encouraging them to seek professional support.

4. **Look after yourself:** share the load with others such as friends and family. Connect with support services such as Lifeline or local services. Remember to do the things you enjoy to help you take time out from stressors and keep you connected with your community and own wellbeing.
Supporting a young person

Supporting a young person who is in emotional pain can be difficult and confusing. The following table contains some practical dos and don’ts when talking to a young person about suicide.

**Be honest  ✔️**
Have open and sincere conversations with young people.

**Keep it simple  ✔️**
Listen and demonstrate care and concern. Don’t trivialise their feelings.

**It is ok not to be ok  ✔️**
Let them know it is also ok to talk about their emotions and how they are feeling.

**Avoid judgement ✗**
Avoid using stigmatising language when talking about suicide.

**Don’t give advice ✗**
When a young person is distressed or overwhelmed this may be perceived as criticism or judgement.

**Don’t ignore ✗**
If there are worries about how a young person is coping, seek help. If you don’t have the answer, someone will.
Self care

Self care is care provided ‘for you by you’. It is about identifying what you need to help keep yourself well and connected to your loved ones and your community. Although it may be hard, looking out for yourself means taking the time to do some of the activities that make you feel better about yourself and your life situation.

Why it’s important to take care of yourself

When we’re stressed or busy, caring for ourselves is usually put on hold, but that can make things worse. It is important to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself.

Neglecting to prioritise yourself, you risk losing your energy and momentum and it may affect your relationships with friends and family. Sometimes this leads to you being disconnected from your community and the people who can support you.

Taking time for yourself helps you to be more effective and energetic. When you avoid doing the things that make you feel physically and mentally well, you deplete your confidence and self-esteem.

Taking the time to take care of yourself shows others that they too need to put themselves first and not overextend or overwork.
How you can practice self care

1. Stay connected with your community. Attend a local football match, meet with your friends, organise a get together with old mates.
2. Mix with others for work and play.
3. Do things that make you feel happy or good about yourself.
4. Take care of yourself physically – try to maintain healthy diet, drink water regularly and exercise when you can.
5. Make sure you get enough rest. Sleep improves memory, sharpens attention and reduces stress.
6. If you are stressed or overwhelmed, understand that this is ok. It is ok not to feel ok, the important thing is to connect with others and share how you are feeling.
7. Give yourself a pat on the back – it is important to celebrate and acknowledge the good things (even when they might be few). This helps us feel a little better about how we are feeling.

Remember: Looking after ourselves is just as important as looking after others. To help reduce the negative effects of stress and worry, take time out for yourself or try something new.
Wellways Australia is a leading not-for-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring all Australians lead active and fulfilling lives in their community. Wellways deliver the Murrumbidgee Suicide Prevention program which works with individuals and groups to provide after suicide support and to help create suicide safe communities.

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