



# Understanding suicide

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● **Factors to consider**

● **Different signs of distress**

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● **Symptoms of depression**

# Understanding Suicide

Although suicide is an individual act, it is part of a broader context of interactions between the person, their immediate community, and society in general. The person's quality of life, their social network, as well as the availability of resources when they need help, all influence their situation of distress.

What causes a person to no longer see solutions to their problems is usually not the problem itself, but rather their perception of the problem.

There is generally not a single cause of suicide, but a complex mix of risk factors that interact together.

**To properly understand suicidal behavior,  
it is important to take all factors into account.**

## Predisposing factors for suicide

These factors are linked to a person's life history and make them more vulnerable.

- Abuse
- Violence
- Mental health problems
- Etc.

## Factors that precipitate suicide

These are the straw that breaks the camel's back.

- Breakup
- Failure
- Rejection
- Other difficult and recent life events
- Etc.

## Factors that contribute to suicide

Behaviors or events that increase the risk of suicide at a specific moment.

- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Lack of resources
- Etc.

## Protective factors

These factors reduce the effect of the three other factors and broaden the range of possible solutions.

- Availability of resources in the person's surroundings
- Presence of healthy role models
- Etc.

# Myths and realities about suicide

The taboos surrounding suicide have given rise to several myths and beliefs. Although this delicate subject is gradually making its way into the major social issues of our time, several statements still need to be demystified.

In order to act collectively and more effectively to prevent suicide, we invite you to consult our section "Frequently asked questions about suicide" available on our website. You will find different statements about suicide as well as their explanations.

# Recognizing signs of distress

People who are thinking about suicide indicate their intentions more or less clearly to those around them.

It is therefore important to identify warning signs of suicide, which are indicators of calls for help. This makes it possible to intervene in time.

# Be careful of misleading signs

A sudden improvement in mood may mean that the person is getting better, but it may also mean that they have planned their action and feel "at peace" after making the decision to act. According to their perception, they may think that they will soon stop suffering or stop making others suffer.

## Different signs of distress

### Direct or indirect verbal message

The person talks about their intention to kill themselves clearly or in a more indirect way, talks about death, being fed up or exhausted.

- « I want to kill myself. »
- « I am going to kill myself. »
- « I don't feel like living anymore. »
- « Life is not worth it. »
- « You would be much better off without me. »
- « Soon, you will have peace, I'm going to clear out. »
- Etc.

### Emotional indicators

- Symptoms of depression (pay attention to signs of anger, impulsivity, or irritability in adolescents)
- Symptoms of anxiety
- Delusions of persecution
- Etc.

### Cognitive indicators

- Difficulty concentrating
- Incoherence and confusion in speech
- Fixations
- Lack of motivation
- Memory loss
- Etc.

### Behavioral indicators

- Change in behavior
- Giving away belongings
- Writing a suicide note
- Sudden interest in suicide and in methods of suicide
- Isolation
- Spontaneous remission (the person suddenly seems relieved/happy, but nothing is resolved)
- Neglect of the body and physical needs
- Etc.

**Feeling sad, being depressed, having “dark thoughts” or experiencing sleep disturbances does not necessarily mean that you are suffering from depression.**

For a person to be considered as having a major depressive disorder, they must have symptoms for the first time, or these must be clearly more severe than during the last episode.

These symptoms must also be present most of the day, almost every day, for at least two consecutive weeks.

The episode must finally be accompanied by clinically significant distress or impairment in functioning

## Symptoms of depression

It is important to discuss the symptoms you are experiencing with your doctor.

The goal of any treatment is to help you become yourself again so that you can enjoy life as before. To do this, the right treatment to manage and alleviate all your symptoms must be found. Even if medication is prescribed, it may take some time before it takes effect and you may need to try different medications before finding the one that works best for you. In addition, the goal of treatment goes beyond an improvement in your condition. You must continue to feel better in the long term.

Depression is not simply a temporary change in mood or a sign of weakness. It is a real medical problem, leading to many emotional, physical, behavioral and cognitive symptoms.

### Emotional symptoms

- **Persistent sadness, almost every day**  
This feeling of sadness may occur without apparent reason. It can be intense and nothing seems able to make it go away.
- **Feeling of worthlessness, excessive or inappropriate guilt**
- **Suicidal thoughts**  
These thoughts can often occur during depression. They must be taken very seriously and the person must seek help immediately.
- **Loss of interest or pleasure in activities**  
This loss of interest can affect all areas of life; from previous hobbies (ex: going to the movies, reading, shopping) to daily activities that the person enjoyed (ex: cooking, doing various tasks, playing with children).

## Physical symptoms

- **Low energy**  
People suffering from depression often feel a lack of energy, even if they have not made any physical effort. This depressive fatigue is characterized by the fact that neither rest nor sleep relieves it.
- **Psychomotor impairment**  
Depression can make it feel like everything in us is slowed down : speech, thoughts and body movements; longer pauses before responding; decrease in volume and inflection of the voice, in the amount or variety of content. Mutism may also accompany depression.
- **Aches and pains**  
Depression may be accompanied by physical pain (headaches, joint pain, stomach aches, etc.).
- **Weight change**
- **Insomnia or hypersomnia**  
Sleep is often interrupted or not restorative. The person often wakes up very early and the mental distress felt prevents them from going back to sleep. In other cases, there may be an excessive need for sleep.

## Behavioral symptoms

- **Change in appetite**  
In most cases, appetite decreases; food seems tasteless and portions seem too large. However, some people sometimes increase their food intake (especially sweets), which can lead to weight gain.
- **Feeling of nervousness**  
For some people, depression makes them very agitated and nervous (inability to remain seated, pacing, wringing hands, fidgeting with clothes or other objects, etc.).

## Cognitive symptoms

- **Difficulty making decisions or concentrating**  
Depression can reduce a person's ability to think, concentrate or make them indecisive.

**If you experience some of the symptoms listed in this document and they affect your life, do not hesitate to seek help.**

**Consulting a recognized mental health resource or a doctor is an essential step.**

**Do not neglect the help you can receive from those close to you and remember to think about what you can.**