

Talking to someone about suicidal thoughts and feelings can be extremely difficult. If you are unsure whether someone is suicidal, the best way to find out is to ask them if they are thinking about suicide. This shows you care and they are not alone. It allows the other person to talk about their feelings and plans – the first step to getting help.

The following flowchart provides JCU staff with a guide to support someone who may be at risk of suicide. If you are not with the person, obtain details about their current situation and whereabouts (including phone number).

In case of an emergency, call 000. For more assistance at any point in this process call the QLD Health Acute Care Team on 1300 642 255 or Suicide Call Back 1300 659 467.

Step 1 – Start a Conversation

A helpful way to start the conversation is by checking in on them:

“I’m really worried about you and what you said/wrote in your email/the message that you left”

“I wanted to check in with you because you haven’t seemed yourself lately”

“I am really worried about you and need to ask if you have been thinking about suicide”

Step 2 – Enquire about active suicidal thoughts

Check on the presence of active suicidal thoughts to assess risk, as a YES answer to any of these questions below may indicate immediate action is required

Sometimes people can say things like:

“I’ve had enough”

“I can’t take this anymore” or

“I wish I didn’t feel like this any longer”

This can be an expression of despair without intending or thinking about self-harm or suicide. If someone does not have any active suicidal thoughts, it is still important to offer support and referral services.

Questions to assist assessing presence of active suicidal thoughts:

- Are you thinking about attempting suicide?
- Do you have a suicide plan?
- Have you identified a method?
- Have you identified when you may act on a suicide plan?

If the person answers YES to any of the above, take action.

Step 3 – Assess Risk

LOW RISK

Active suicidal thoughts not present
Risk factors may be present

Let the person know that there are a number of services that can provide support and if appropriate, assist them contact one of the services

HIGH RISK

Active suicidal thoughts present
Risk factors may/may not be present

Let the person know that you need to get help, stay with them until support arrives - if the person leaves or hangs up, call 000 and request Police do a welfare check

Step 4 – Referral Options

Students only: JCU Counselling Service
4781 4711 (Tsv) or 4232 1150 (Cns)
Staff only: LifeWorks 1800 604 640
Alternatively:
GP
Lifeline (13 11 14)
Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636)
Suicide Call Back Service (1300 659 467)

Emergency Services (000)
Acute Care Team (1300 642 255)
JCU Security +15555 (if ambulance called to campus please let JCU Security know)

When making a referral, state the following:
“Hello, I’m _____ from _____, I have a person with me who is at HIGH RISK OF SUICIDE”

See over for further guidance and support services.

Taking care of yourself

Supporting someone who has suicidal thoughts and behaviours can take a lot of time and emotional energy. You may find yourself worried and preoccupied about the person and this can be physically and emotionally exhausting. It is important to maintain your own wellbeing, and have a range of strategies in place that you can use if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed. For staff, the Employee Assistance Helpline 1800 604 640 and LifeWorks website www.lifeworks.com/au provide further information and support. Students can access the JCU Counselling Service by emailing studentwellbeing@jcu.edu.au or visiting www.jcu.edu.au/sew

Useful information when talking to a suicidal person

Do:

- **Be yourself.** Let the person know you care, that they are not alone.
- **Listen.** Let the suicidal person unload despair, vent anger.
- **Be sympathetic,** non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting.
- **Take the person seriously.**
- **Be mindful of your role as a staff/student and your boundaries.** Be clear to the person you are supporting about your role and don't commit to being the only person someone at risk contacts. Encourage them to get support from professional mental health services or attend the hospital if required.
- **Remember privacy of the suicidal person,** be respectful and do not gossip.

Don't:

- **Argue with the suicidal person.** Avoid saying things like: "You have so much to live for," "Your suicide will hurt your family," or "Look on the bright side."
- **Act shocked or make value judgements.** Don't lecture on the value of life, or say that suicide is wrong.
- **Promise confidentiality.** Refuse to be sworn to secrecy.

Community Mental Health Services

The following support services are available to everyone :

- **Lifeline Australia** provides a 24-hour phone crisis support service to anyone at anytime. Lifeline also provides information and training for family and friends of people at risk of suicide.
Phone 13 11 14 website www.lifeline.org.au
- **Suicide Call Back Service** is a 24-hour, 7 days a week phone crisis counselling service for people at risk of suicide, carers of someone who is suicidal and those bereaved by suicide. You can also access up to 6 sessions of counselling with the same counsellor at times scheduled to suit you, if you don't already have professional support. Website also provides access to a suicide safety planning app and templates.
Phone 1300 659 467 website www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au.
- **Beyond Blue** provides a 24-hour phone crisis support as well as information and resources for o help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live. The Website also provides access to a suicide safety planning app and templates.
Phone 1300 224 636 website www.beyondblue.org.au.
- **Queensland Health Acute Care Team** are the first point of contact to public mental health services 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Following triage, they facilitate the most appropriate type of care - inpatient, community or crisis interventions.
Phone 1300 642 255

Student Equity and Wellbeing Service (on-campus support for students)

The Student Equity and Wellbeing Counselling Service provides an emergency appointment each day. You can contact the Service on 4781 4711 in Townsville and 4232 1150 in Cairns to check if the emergency appointment is still available. The Service is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm.