

## HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO THREATENS SUICIDE

**Be direct.** Talk openly about suicide for example: "Over the past few days you have been mentioning wanting to die a few times. Have you had thoughts of hurting yourself?"

**Be willing to listen.** Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.

**Be non-judgmental.** Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life as their perception of their world might be worthless.

**Be reassuring.** Show interest, support and care. **Don't be sworn to secrecy** as you may need to involve others. Seek support from a professional, someone in authority or a family member (once permission is obtained from the person to do so).

**Offer hope** that alternatives are available but do not offer superficial reassurance.

**Try and remove any means** that could be used to commit the act of suicide e.g. pills, ropes or knives.

**Do not leave them alone.** Get help from an OSS Counsellor.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE HAVING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

- **Do not withdraw and isolate yourself.**
- **Avoid the use of alcohol and drugs** as they can make you feel worse and impair your decision-making skill.
- **Talk to someone:** speak to a friend or family member.
- **Visit OSS to consult a counsellor.**
- If after hours or over a weekend **call the Wits Student Crisis Line.**

**ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT SUICIDE IS A PERMANENT SOLUTION TO A TEMPORARY PROBLEM!**

## WHERE TO GET HELP

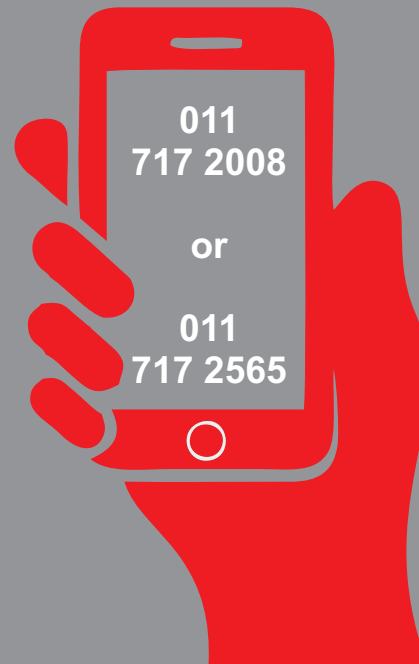
### Office of Student Success (OSS)

PVT Building 1st Floor  
29 Princess of Wales Street  
Parktown

or

### OSS Satellite Office

Student Liaison Hub  
4th Level  
Entrance Faculty of Health Sciences

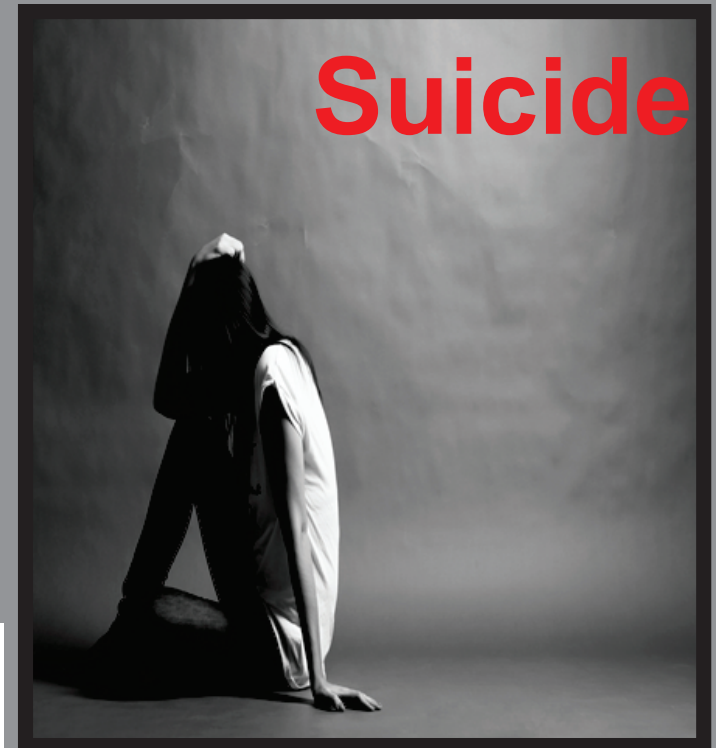


### Wits Student Crisis Line

0800 111 331 (Available 24/7/365)

## Self-Harm and

## Suicide



**Self harm** is thought to be directly linked with suicide but this isn't the case. Generally people who self-harm do not wish to kill themselves; whereas suicide is a way of ending life.

**Self-harm is the intentional and deliberate hurting of oneself, most commonly it is done by:**

- Cutting
- Burning
- Hitting
- Picking at the skin
- Pulling hair
- Biting
- Carving

**Most people self harm**

- To escape their feelings
- To cope with life stressors
- To express their pain
- To punish themselves

## WHAT IS SUICIDE?

Suicide is the voluntary and intentional act of taking of one's life.



## Why do people think about committing suicide?

Often the people thinking about suicide feel alone and isolated, and often feel like no one understands how they feel. Some people think about suicide, but do not plan or act on it.

- **Changes in life may be upsetting** and they may **want to escape a difficult problem** or situation, or **get relief from terrible stress** of which they see no way out.
- Many individuals who are suicidal **feel out of control** and they see suicide as a way to get back a sense of control in their lives.
- Sadly many individuals **feel like they are a burden** on their family, and suicide is seen as a way to relieve that burden or punish themselves for something they think they have done wrong.
- **Experiencing a major life transition**, such as the loss of a loved one, moving to a new city or failing a course once in university after being a high achiever in school can lead to someone feeling depressed, isolated and lonely
- **Feelings of hopelessness / helplessness**, being unable to see a solution therefore being completely overwhelmed and wanting to end the unbearable emotions.
- Developing negative feelings about oneself, they might **see themselves as a failure** especially if they are experiencing academic or social problems at university.
- **Alcohol and substance abuse** can cause a loss of self-control and therefore the individual engages in impulsive suicidal behaviours.
- **Unresolved anger** can be hard to acknowledge and to deal with.
- **Identity dilemmas**
- **Bullying**
- **Financial and/or legal problems**
- **A traumatic experience such as rape.**

**Depression is the leading cause of suicide. It can affect someone's outlook on their world therefore leaving them feeling hopeless, helpless and with no reason to live.**

## Some warning signs of Suicide:

- Risk-taking and impulsive behavior: engaging in risky, dangerous acts like drinking and driving, having unprotected sex or taking
- Threatening suicide and/or expressing a strong wish to die
- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Fascinating over or preoccupying oneself with death
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about being a burden to others therefore withdrawing from loved ones and being isolated
- Displaying mood swings: becoming negative, anxious, aggressive or irritable and not wanting to be around friends
- Excessive feelings of guilt, self-blame and failure
- Referring to death via poetry, writings and drawings
- Exhibiting dramatic changes in personality or appearance
- Changing eating or sleeping patterns
- Declining in performance
- A history of suicide attempts

**NB: It is important to note that some people commit suicide without showing warning signs!**

**Don't keep suicide a secret. Talk about it, get help, and remember that you can fight depression - and win!**