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Family Huddle Newsletter



Mental Health and Substance Use Family Support Services

Tips and resources for people who want to be more effective in supporting adults with mental health/substance use concerns.

MESSAGE FROM YOUR HOST



Hello family and friends. This month's topic is a tough one. It's how to support your loved one when they are expressing suicidal ideation. To be most effective, you must have courage and mindfulness, and you must confront longstanding societal myths. But first, reading this newsletter might create anxiety in some of you and this is normal. Please be kind to yourself and just notice what you are feeling and give yourself permission to read it at another time.

In this newsletter you will learn information about suicidal ideation and steps in how to navigate these difficult conversations. Also, you will be reminded of the skills you already have and when to practice them.

When having a conversation with your loved one about suicide, the goal is to become your loved one's 'safe witness' to their pain and suffering. To become a 'safe witness' you have to be completely and truly emotionally present with your loved one. You have to be emotionally regulated so you don't accidentally bring into the conversation your own anxiety and fear. When you are not aware of your own feelings, you may unconsciously steer the conversation in a direction that brings your own feelings down. This is what you want to avoid.



Some facts about suicidal ideation

- Passive suicidal ideation (thoughts of not wanting to wake up, thoughts of wishing you are not longer alive) is common
- To think about suicide doesn't mean the person will attempt suicide
- Men are at greater risk than women to die by suicide
- Women are at greater risk than men to attempt death by suicide
- Women tend to use less lethal methods than men
- Self harming behaviour increases risk for suicide
- Talking about suicide will not cause suicide
- Most people want to talk about their suicidal ideation but may not know how to start the conversation or fear they may be judged
- There are signs to look for that may indicate suicidal ideation or a plan to attempt
- Always take the person seriously when talking about suicide
- Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress, not a harmless bid for attention, and should not be ignored.



Signs to look out for

- Talks or threats of suicide
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- A preoccupation with death, dying or suicide
- Expressed feelings of helplessness and/or feelings of hopelessness
- Increased substance and/or alcohol use
- Engaging in reckless and risky behaviour
- Giving away personal items
- Change in sleep pattern– unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Increase in anxiety, agitation or anger
- Feelings of being trapped
- Social withdrawal
- Unexplained increased in energy
- Feeling of being a burden to family/friends or society



Steps to having a supportive conversation

Now you know what to keep an eye out for, you can think about how to respond to your loved one if they come to you with their thoughts of suicide. There is a lot of stigma for those who struggle with suicidal thoughts, so you may have to start the conversation. Following these steps will help you in your conversation with your loved one.

- 1. Breathe and focus your attention.** This is a very important step as it allows you to completely listen to your loved one's pain and suffering without responding to your own feelings of anxiety, worry and fear.
- 2. Listen without judgement.** Allow your loved one to talk freely and openly without you interjecting or taking control of the conversation.
- 3. Do not try to fix the problem.** This will be difficult for you, because your natural tendency will be to want to make your loved one feel better.
- 4. Validate their pain and suffering.** Let them know you understand their pain and fear.
- 5. Ask specific questions to gain clarity on what they are actually thinking.**
- 6. Do not rush the conversation.** Allow lots of time for your loved one to fully express their feelings and thoughts.
- 7. Ask them how you may help, instead of you offering your own ideas.**
- 8. Practise self-care.** Take care of your own pain and sadness about having your loved one struggle with suicidal ideation.

Myths about suicidal thinking ...

1. People who die by suicide always leave notes
2. People who talk about suicide are attention seeking
3. Once someone has decided to die by suicide, they do not change their mind
4. Once the person starts feeling better, the risk is over
5. Talking about suicide with a loved one will cause them to follow through with suicide
6. If someone survives a suicide, it means that they weren't serious about ending their life

What to do if your loved one is expressing suicidal ideation

1. Call 911
2. Call their case manager at their mental health office. It is best to do this with your loved one either being present or being aware
3. Take loved one to the hospital or doctor's office
4. Stay with loved one until they are assessed

RESOURCES

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/suicide-canada-infographic.html>

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/03/19/mark-lukach-tedx-talk-no-matter-what_n_4987309.html?ri18n=true

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/curious/201405/why-do-people-kill-themselves-new-warning-signs>

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/media/4097>



Reflective Box

How can you take care of your own well-being during this stressful time? Do you have a close family member or friend with whom you can talk? Supporting someone who has suicidal ideation is stressful and scary and not easy to cope with on your own. Make sure you are attending to your needs as well.



New Support Groups

FSS will be starting two new monthly support groups in Port Coquitlam and Surrey.

Please contact our program for more information if you are interested in attending our monthly support groups.

Family Support Events



You are invited to a FREE Family Day Workshop for Supporters Hosted by The Family Support Services Team

Celebrating Resilient Families* (and we're all resilient!!)

Family [fam-uh-lee, fam-lee]

noun, plural fam-i-lies.

1. a group of people to whom you are emotionally close and consider 'family' whether or not you are biologically or legally related.

Families and friends who are supporting family members with mental health concerns know how difficult things can get. What keeps a family going when the going gets tough? We will explore some ways in which families can use their inner resilience to restore their energy and renew their capacity to provide support. Guests will hear personal stories of resilience and learn what the newest research has to say. Most of all, guests will have the opportunity to engage with other families and begin to build the foundation of a resilient and compassionate community.

Details:

Saturday, March 7, 2020

Doors open at 9:30 am

**coffee, tea, and pastries
available**

Check in- 9:30 to 10:00 am

Workshop Time: 10:30 to 3:30 pm

**Lunch Included - self-serve
burger and salad bar**

**Location: Surrey Golf Course-
7700 168 th street, Surrey**

Parking is Free onsite

Registration

Go to:

**[https://form.simplesurvey.com/
f/I/FamilyDayRegistration](https://form.simplesurvey.com/f/I/FamilyDayRegistration)**

Or Call:

1.833.898.6200

Key Note Speaker

For 13 years, Marika Sandrelli has worked in the role of Knowledge Exchange Leader for Mental Health & Substance Use Services in Fraser Health where she leads that region's Trauma & Resiliency Informed Practice initiative.