

WOULD YOU SPOT THE SIGNS?

For many people, telling those close to them that they are experiencing thoughts of suicide can be incredibly difficult. How do we know if someone is thinking about suicide? We cannot be certain without asking directly. There are often 'signs' we can look out for which indicate someone could be considering ending their life and it's time to ask.

Signs can manifest in many ways. Someone having thoughts of suicide may be giving away possessions, withdrawing socially, acting impulsively or self-harming. You may have noticed that they are feeling hopeless, sad, lonely, angry or worthless. Perhaps they are displaying physical changes, such as self-neglect, a disrupted sleep pattern or loss of appetite. They may be struggling with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety or an eating disorder.

Someone who is suicidal may also express this through verbal cues:

"everyone will be better off without me";

"all of my problems will end soon";

"I just can't take it anymore";

"I want to die."

Unexpected positive changes in a person's behaviour could also signal thoughts of suicide. The key is to trust your intuition. If you have an uneasy feeling something is not ok, use this to explore suicide with the person you are concerned about.

Occasionally, a significant event or change in a person's life can lead to thoughts of suicide. Changes of any nature, positive or negative, can be associated with feelings of loss. Similarly, certain events or experiences can make someone feel particularly vulnerable to thoughts of suicide. If someone seems different following a life change, consider their feelings with empathy and an open mind. Avoid making assumptions about how they may feel. What's important is that the event is significant to the young person, even if you can't understand why this has caused them to feel suicidal.

Anyone can experience thoughts of suicide and there is no definitive guide on how to tell if someone is suicidal. Almost anything could be considered an indicator, so identifying these signs requires your own individual knowledge of that person and their usual behaviour. If something doesn't feel quite right, explore this further by asking them if they are experiencing thoughts of suicide.

What if you are worried about someone?

Asking a direct question about thoughts of suicide can be really difficult. Our 'Conversation Starters' can help you to reach out to someone and ask them about suicide. Check out the PAPYRUS website for ways to start the conversation.

