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Helping someone with harming behaviours or thoughts of suicide



Caring for yourself

Remember to take care of your own health and well-being. Here are a few tips on how you can maintain your mental and emotional health:

- **Seek support:** Talk to family and friends, investigate support for yourself or join a group.
- **Get enough rest:** Plan to give yourself sufficient rest.
- **Practice relaxation:** Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga, or mindfulness, daily.
- **Stay informed:** Inform yourself about resources and services available in your community.
- **Maintain hobbies and interests:** Continue to pursue your own passions and interests outside of your caregiving role.



Balancing caregiving responsibilities with your life

Here are some tips to help you find a balance between caregiving and your daily life:

- **Plan your tasks:** Create a daily schedule that allocates time for caregiving, work, and personal activities.
- **Get help:** Ask other family members or friends to share caregiving duties.
- **Be flexible:** Their needs may change, so be prepared to adjust your schedule when necessary.
- **Keep in touch:** Stay in touch with your family, friends, work colleagues and other people.



Further Information

- **NSW Mental Health Line:**
1800 011 511 – A 24/7 phone service
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/mental-health-line.aspx>
- **Lifeline:**
 - > Toolkit for carers:
13 11 14 – 24 hour Phone number
www.lifeline.org.au/media/wyjpzxw5/web_sept_11-4pp-tool-kit_help-someone-at-risk-of-suicide.pdf
 - > Tips for carers around self-harm: <https://toolkit.lifeline.org.au/topics/self-harm/for-friends-family-self-harm>
- **Roses in the Ocean:** Resources for carers www.rosesintheocean.com.au/resources-hub/resources/?preset=caring-for-someone-in-suicidal-crisis
- **Safe Havens Cafes:** A NSW Health initiative for people with suicidal thoughts www.health.nsw.gov.au/towardszerosuicides/Pages/safe-haven.aspx
- **Beyond Blue:**
1300 224 636
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support>
- **SANE:**
<https://betteroffwithyou.org.au/>
- **13Yarn:**
call 13 92 76 to speak with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island Crisis Supporter 24/7;
<https://www.13yarn.org.au/>

Information for carers

This information is for families and carers when someone has suicidal thoughts or harming behaviours. It will help you understand suicidality, what to expect in the long-term, how to offer support, maintain your well-being and balance caregiving with your daily life responsibilities.

In an emergency call 000



**Mental Health
Carers NSW**

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Understanding suicidality and suicidal behaviours

Suicidality is when an individual has thoughts of suicide or self-harm. Suicidal behaviours involve actions to end one's life or to relieve stress.

- *Suicidal thoughts* can last for a short or long time, sometimes spanning months or years and with wide variation in behaviours. Some people make plans and act on these thoughts, but others manage these thoughts and take no action to end their life.
- *Suicidal behaviours* include both planned serious attempts to end one's life and immediate actions directly related to a crisis. Not all self-harm behaviours are suicidal in intent. Some people self-harm in response to stress but without thoughts of ending their life. All self-harm behaviours should be assessed for suicidal intent.

Recognizing suicidality, suicidal behaviours and self-harm will help you communicate with the person you care for.



What to expect when caring for someone with suicidality

It's important to stay prepared and informed when caring for someone with continuing thoughts of suicide (*suicidality*). It can be emotionally draining for both of you. Here's what you might encounter:

- **Fluctuations in mood:** The person you care for may experience good days and bad days. Be prepared for sudden shifts in mood and offer support when you can.
- **Therapy and medication:** Suicidality is closely associated with depression. Encourage the person to seek professional help, attend appointments with healthcare professionals and adhere to their treatment plan. Many people find medication and other treatments to be very helpful.
- **Safety planning:** Develop an agreed safety plan together. This will outline what to do in case of a crisis. Share this plan with trusted friends or family and key healthcare providers.
- **Communication challenges:** Maintaining effective communication can be difficult. Encourage conversations and consider getting assistance if you feel the need to improve communication.
- **Self-care:** Encourage the person to care for themselves with a good diet, exercise, relaxation and hobbies to help manage stress.



Caring for someone who is self-harming

You may feel confused and worried about self-harming behaviours.

Maintaining effective communication can be challenging. It is important to remember that how you say something can be as important as what you say.

The person you care for needs to feel supported, understood, and cared for. Tips for conversations with someone who is self-harming can be found on the Lifeline website – see links within this brochure.



Supporting someone with suicidality or suicidal behaviour

As a carer, you can support someone with suicidality:

- **Stay informed:** A short list of some useful sources of information is provided within this brochure.
- **Guiding to help:** Encourage the person to use these resources (e.g., see the link to SANE).
- **Active listening:** Encourage the person to share their thoughts, emotions, and plans with you. Listen without judgment.
- **Be patient:** They will have ups and downs. Offer your continuing support, even during setbacks.

