



# Don't brush it under the carpet

Not everyone who thinks about suicide will talk about their feelings and some people will hide how they feel.

If you're worried about someone, here are some of the warning signs that you can **look out for**:

- Being distant and avoiding spending time with people
- Not taking part in activities they used to enjoy
- Finding it hard to cope with everyday things
- Seeming agitated, restless or tearful
- Extreme mood swings
- Suddenly seeming better or recovered after a period of depression
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Becoming preoccupied with wills, possessions or inheritance
- Talking about feeling hopeless, trapped, or being in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others or having no reason to live
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs (including prescribed or over-the-counter medications like pain management)
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye, either directly or indirectly

For older people, we might be tempted to dismiss some of these signs as part of old age. Take a pause, don't brush away these signs of low mood and distress and find a time and place when you can ask the person about how they are feeling.

If you are worried about someone, here is an outline of the steps you can take:

- Ask them directly about your concerns and give them an opportunity to talk. People who are feeling suicidal often feel a great sense of relief in being able to talk about their experience
- Try to listen non-judgementally, taking time to understand their feelings and point of view. You don't have to 'fix' their problem and it is better not to respond with advice
- Let them know you care about them and you want to help. You can help them with practical things in the moment, like offering a glass of water, putting the kettle on to make a hot drink, or helping them contact their GP or friends/ family
- Talk about what they need to stay safe when they have suicidal thoughts (this is called 'making a safety plan'). This can include talking about what/ who helps them to feel calmer and more able to cope, who they can turn to when they feel distressed, and a safe place they can go
- Assure the person that they did the right thing in talking with you, and support them to seek help from their local networks and services
- Make sure you also look after yourself. Supporting someone who is struggling in this way can be distressing. Give yourself time to rest and process what has happened.



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You can find further advice and guidance on how to talk with someone about low mood and suicide on the Older Adults Suicide Prevention Hub website:

▶ [bit.ly/OlderAdultsHub](https://bit.ly/OlderAdultsHub)

The Samaritans also gives helpful advice, including video clips and resources, of how to talk and listen to someone with suicidal thoughts.

☎ **116 123**

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▶ [samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/supporting-someone-suicidal-thoughts/](https://samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/supporting-someone-suicidal-thoughts/)

For further information and reliable mental health advice for older people and those who care for them, take a look at MindEd for Families:

▶ [mindedforfamilies.org.uk/older-people](https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/older-people)

