



After an Attempt



The Suicide Attempt

- Is a non-fatal act in which an individual deliberately causes self-injury with the intent to die.
- It is a signal that suggests that something has gone wrong for that person.
- It is a cry for help and attention to get some care, support and protection
It is often aimed at adjusting life rather than ending it.

How The Person May Be Feeling

- Confused – everyone may be too upset or preoccupied to reassure and explain things to them
- That attempted suicide works as a method of control
- Hopeless – like there is nothing ahead of them and no end to the pain
- Alone; Fear; Anxiety; Anger; Rejected; Sense of failure; Depression; Guilt; Vulnerable; Embarrassment

What May Increase The Possibility Of Another Attempt

- If there is a failure of communication and understanding
- If people carry on with "business as usual"



Reactions Of Family and Friends

- **Denial:** "My child couldn't do this. It must have been an accident!"
 - Reality is that any person can be susceptible to suicidal thoughts.
- **Anger:** "How could they do this to me?"
 - A suicide attempt may not be about other people but instead about the individual's personal pain.
- **Shame:** "What will others think?"
 - A suicide attempt is not an indicator of the kind of person someone is. Even if you feel suicide is wrong, please try to separate what the person did from who the person is.
- **Avoidance:** "If we ignore it and don't talk about it, it'll go away."
 - There is an element of grief when someone attempts suicide. While the person did not die, there is a change in the relationship and what we assumed the relationship would be. Avoiding this obvious change is not going to serve anyone well.
- **Fear:** "Will they try again?"
 - Afraid of the fact that they have the capacity to self-destruct. As the fear lessens, it will remain as an uncomfortable and possibly unrecognised feeling of anxiety, especially in a crisis
- **Guilt:** "What did I do to cause this?" or "What should I have done to prevent this?"
 - Many of us have regrets in our relationships; when this does occur it can be viewed as an opportunity to review the relationship and changes that may need to be made.
- **Blame People/Things:** "Who was at fault?"
 - People often attempt suicide as a result of life becoming too painful (emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually etc). As a result, blaming one person or one event is often not effective nor is it accurate.
- **Provide Distractions:** "If I give her what she wants then she'll stop thinking about it".
 - While it may be uncomfortable to have these conversations, communication on an emotional level is going to be more effective than ignoring what has happened.

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After an Attempt



Do

- Encourage them to do most of the talking.
- Be understanding to the best of your ability.
- Reassure that person that he/she does have someone to turn to.
- Listen for any type of hints that they may be at risk for a future attempt.
- Help the person explore their feelings.
- Help determine what needs to be done or changed.
- Help identify the resources needed to improve things.
- Communicate your concern for the well-being of the person.
- Be an active listener and show your support.
- Encourage the person to seek help.
- Let them tell you what's wrong.
- Let them talk about their feelings and problems while you listen
- Accept what they say with out trying to get defensive.
- Voice your acceptance of their feelings.
- Communicate accurately by repeating important aspects and what you understand.
- Respond in a calm, even-tempered manner.
- Discuss coping strategies to use when life gets difficult and/or stressful.
- Look at the person realistically in terms of strengths and weaknesses.
- Accept that they have good points and bad points.
- Accept intellectual and behavioural limitations.
- Accept anger as one of your emotions so it doesn't fester.
- Let them know they can approach people whether they do or do not have a problem.
- Let them know you are available to talk to.
- Help them see that life and conditions can change.
- Offer hope through positive changes.

DON'T

- Say everything will be alright
- Delay dealing with the person
- Add to the person's guilt
- Debate about whether suicide is right or wrong
- Panic
- Challenge
- Ignore
- Name call
- Criticize
- Punish
- Get angry
- Use a quick-fix approach
- Be appalled or offended
- Dramatize
- Don't expect too much, yet don't expect too little.

Local Resource List

24-hour Lines:

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|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Alberta Help Line | 1-877-303-2642 |
| Kids Help Phone | 1-800-668-6868 |
| Crisis Line | 1-800-784-2433 |
| Red Deer Sexual Assault | 403-356-1099 |
| Child Abuse Hotline | 1-800-387-5437 |
| Central Alberta Women's Shelter | 403-346-5643 |
| Native Youth Crisis Hotline | 1-877-209-1266 |
| 49 th Street Youth Shelter | 403-341-3190 |

Office Hours:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Mental Health Clinic (Walk-In) | 403-340-5466 |
| Vantage Counselling (Walk-In) | 403-340-8995 |
| Canadian Mental Health | 403-342-2266 |
| Red Deer Native Friendship Centre | 403-340-0020 |
| AADAC (AHS) | 403-340-5274 |
| Red Deer College | |
| Counselling Services | 403-343-4064 |
| Student Support Centre | 403-343-4096 |
| Central Alberta AIDS Network Society | 403-346-8858 |
| Red Deer Family Services Bureau | 403-343-6400 |
| People's Place Shelter (5pm-9am) | 403-342-4722 |
| Women's Outreach Centre | 1-866-347-2480 |