

# Face Adversities with Perseverance Overcome Hurdles with Resilience

## Schools



### Introduction

Every person is endowed with talents. Everyone is unique, important and precious. Yet, we all face adversities at different points in life. When students experience immense pressure, schools should help them enhance their resilience and reduce their suicidal risks.

### Factors Affecting Suicidal Behaviour



Suicide is a complex behaviour with no single cause. It results from a complicated interaction of physiological, psychological, cognitive and environmental factors.

Talking about suicide could be a cry for help or the last warning sign preceding a suicide attempt. We should take every precaution when someone talks about suicidal ideation, intent or plan. We must not take these lightly.

### Warning Signs

#### I Learning Behaviour

- drop in academic performance
- unmotivated to learn or unable to concentrate, absent from lessons or truancy

#### II Physiological Symptoms

- frequently feel unwell such as headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, body aches
- change in sleep or eating patterns, such as having nightmares, eating disturbances
- neglect personal hygiene or physical appearance

#### III Change in Mood

- have a sense of hatred towards others, become irritable, moody, aggressive
- experience pervasive sadness, cry easily and get inert towards everything
- have an increased sense of hopelessness, helplessness and worthlessness



#### IV Change in Behaviour

##### A. Withdrawal from Relationships

- lose interest in surroundings, friends, or hobbies
- stop joining any activities or withdraw from interest clubs and become isolated

##### B. High Risk Behaviours

- start to involve in high risk activities
- increase in drug or alcohol usage
- exhibit repeated self-harm behaviours

##### C. Expression of Ideas and Topics about Death and Suicide

- directly indicate ideation about death/suicide through essays, conversations or artwork, or indirectly express feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- explore various means of suicide, such as inquire peers or conduct internet search regarding the use of sleeping pills, hanging, charcoal burning
- make final arrangements e.g. give away treasured possessions, remind someone how to look after pets

#### V Encounter Significant Stress Events

- death of a family member or a friend; severe family disruption
- unwanted pregnancy; breakup with boyfriend or girlfriend; suicide of a peer
- situational stress, e.g. trouble with legal jurisdiction/disciplinary penalties, physical/sexual abuse



## Further Assessment of Suicidal Risk

Ask the following questions :

- (I)deation) Has he/she thought about committing suicide?
- (P)lan) Does he/she have a suicide plan?
- (T)ools) Does he/she have the tools to commit suicide?
- (T)ime) Does he/she have a timetable or time frame to commit suicide?

Source: The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, The University of Hong Kong

## Intervention

If you have noticed any student with suicidal risks, **intervene immediately.**

Immediate Dialogue

Seek Advice

Make Referral

Follow-up

### 1. Immediate Dialogue

- **Attitude:** adopt a caring stance to talk with the student about suicide.
- **Listen actively:** show him/her that you understand his/her distress and are here to help.

- ★ "I notice that recently you seem really disturbed..."
- ★ "You seem different lately. Is something bothering you?"
- ★ "I may not totally understand your feelings right now, but I surely care about you and hope to help you."
- ★ "You are not alone, I will stay with you."
- ★ "I know that you are in pain, let us try to find a way to face your difficulties."
- ★ "What can I do to help? Have you ever sought help from the School Social Worker or School Counsellor?"

## Communication Skills

### Do's ✓

Ask the student directly about suicidal ideation. Let him/her know that you care and he/she is not alone.

Listen patiently. Let the student share his/her feelings and thoughts.

Accept his/her feelings and thoughts with empathy.

Help him/her feel hopeful and that somebody can help.

### Don'ts ✗

Don't promise total confidentiality.  
To ensure the student's safety, you may provide information to other professionals when there is a need.

Don't make provoking remarks to argue with the student. Avoid suggesting ways to solve the problems too early / quickly.

Avoid teaching and prolonged preaching.

Don't be over calm or appear shocked; these might discourage the student from opening up for discussion.

### 2. Seek advice

- Inform the principal of the incident. Implement the whole-school approach to ensure safety of the student in school.
- Notify parents as deemed appropriate and discuss the handling strategies accordingly.
- Based on the student's conditions, seek for opinions from related teachers.
- Consult the professionals (guidance team members, social workers, educational psychologists, doctors, etc.) and discuss the student's needs.

### 3. Make Referral and Follow-up

- Refer the student for timely assessment and counselling services.
- After a referral is made, liaise with the professionals and student's family regularly to review the effectiveness.

## Reference

- **Education Bureau**  
《Package on Prevention of Student Suicide 2010》  
(Chinese version only)  
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/teacher/student-guidance-discipline-services/gd-resources/index.html>
- **24-hour-hotlines:**

The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong	2389 2222
Suicide Prevention Services	2382 0000
Caritas Family Crisis Support Centre — Caritas Crisis Hotline	18288
Social Welfare Department	2343 2255
- **The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, The University of Hong Kong**  
<http://csrp.hku.hk>
- **Hospital Authority Kwai Chung Hospital — Mental Health Education Information**  
<http://www.ha.org.hk/kch/eng/index/eng-index.html>
- **Early Assessment Service for Young People with Psychosis (E.A.S.Y.)**  
<http://www3.ha.org.hk/easy/eng/index.html>

