

Let's talk about  
suicide.

# World Suicide Prevention Day

10TH SEPTEMBER 2021

CHAMPION  
HEALTH



When I started Champion Health, we had a strong team of health professionals behind us. But we lacked the know-how to grow the business.

I approached a friend for support. He was a director of a global organisation. We would catch up regularly at the pub and he became my mentor.


But six months into Champion Health's journey everything changed.

I received a phone call. My friend had taken his life due to a short bout of stress. This really shook me. He had no history of mental ill health, he had a wife and two children, and a successful career.

After this tragedy, we set out on a mission to change and save lives.

We need to do more to support our mental health. So, we've brought together suicide prevention experts and those bereaved by suicide to create this guide.

I hope it can help, if only a little.

This guide contains real stories that some people may find distressing. If you need support, please reach out to the services detailed on the next page. 



**Harry Bliss**  
Co-founder and CEO, Champion Health

# Let's talk about suicide.

The World Health Organization estimates that over 700,000 people take their own life each year – that's one person every 40 seconds. In the UK alone, there are on average 109 deaths by suicide per week.

Despite the progress we've made around normalising mental health, suicide remains a misunderstood and taboo topic. This stigma persists throughout our communities and wider society, despite many of us being touched by suicide in some way.

**It's time this changed.**

**109 people die by suicide each week in the UK** (ONS, 2020)

Champion Health have published this free guide to help dispel the myths around suicide and provide actionable steps that everybody - including organisations - can take to support those who may be struggling.

The theme of World Suicide Prevention Day this year is "Creating Hope Through Action". This reinforces that our actions, no matter how big or small, can provide hope to those who are struggling. It's also a reminder that we are all key players in suicide prevention, as a member of society, as a parent, as a colleague or as a friend. Through action, we can all make a difference.

**We can all play a role in supporting those experiencing a suicidal crisis or those bereaved by suicide.**

Remember, you are not facing this alone. There are people who will listen and support you.

**It's not weak to speak**

# Need help now?

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or feel you can't keep yourself safe, try the following steps:

**Speak to someone you trust about how you are feeling**

**1**

**Contact your GP, dial 111 or contact the helplines below**

**2**

**Call 999 if you are in immediate danger**

**3**

**QUICKEST WAY TO GET HELP**

**Additional UK support is also available**



📞 0800 068 4141  
📍 Helpline for under 35s  
🌐 [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)



📞 0800 58 58 58  
📍 Helpline for men  
🌐 [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)



📞 116 123  
📍 24/7 helpline  
🌐 [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



📞 Text 85258  
📍 24/7 text service  
🌐 [www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org)

**1 in 5 adults in the UK have experienced suicidal thoughts.**

(McManus et al., 2016)

**75% of people who die by suicide in the UK are male**

(ONS, 2020)

**Men aged 45 to 49 have the highest suicide rate in the UK**

(Samaritans, 2019)

# Understanding Suicide.

Suicide is complex. There is no one reason why an individual may die by suicide, or experience suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

For example, a person may feel suicidal due to intense feelings of isolation, hopelessness and the belief the world would be better without them. They may not want to die, but are instead finding it impossible to live.

This complexity makes it difficult to predict who may be affected by suicide and what warning signs to look out for. There are, however, common experiences you might notice in the way a person is communicating or behaving.

## Communication:

- > **Talking about dying or ending their life:**  
"I'd be better off dead" "I wish I hadn't been born"
- > **Talking about feeling hopeless or lacking purpose:**  
"There's no way out" "What's the point?"
- > **Talking about being a burden to others:**  
"Everyone would be better off without me"

## Behaviour:

- > Excessive alcohol or drug use
- > Unusual changes in behaviour
- > Severe shortage of sleep
- > Organising personal affairs
- > Sudden social withdrawal
- > Saying goodbye to loved ones



I lost my only sibling, my brother Josh, in November 2020 to suicide. Josh had been researching techniques to take his own life via harmful online searches.

To ensure more help and support is given to individuals searching for harmful content online, I set up R;pple Suicide Prevention.

R;pple is a browser extension designed to intercept harmful content relating to self-harm and suicide. Free to download\* and available now, R;pple provides support and resources for people suffering from poor mental health.

The tool comprises a message of hope and signposts to free support resources such as helplines, text services and webchats that are available 24/7 from mental health charities.

It's called R;pple because, on average, 135 people are impacted every time somebody takes their own life (Cerel et al., 2019). The ripple-effect is extensive, as my family and Josh's wider circle know only too well. I want to ensure individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and searching for self-harmful content online are offered hope and options for support when they need it.

The tool has already been taken up by high-profile organisations including Universities UK and Network Rail as a means of providing staff and students with mental health signposting, should they need it.

Alice recommends this resource for anyone bereaved by suicide [↗](#)



**Alice Hendy**

Founder & Director, R;pple Suicide Prevention

\*For all educational establishments, charitable organisations and parents

### Myth

"Asking if someone is suicidal will put the idea into their head"

### Truth

It may seem counterintuitive, but asking someone directly about suicidal thoughts can be protective. It gives them permission to talk about how they are feeling, ensuring they feel listened to, validated and like somebody cares for them. Asking about suicide saves lives.

### Myth

"If someone is suicidal, they're not really going to do it - it's just a cry for help"

### Truth

It's important to always take someone who's experiencing suicidal thoughts seriously. They may not want to die, but anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts is likely to be struggling and should be given access to the help and support they need.

## Myths about Suicide.

### Myth

"You can only experience suicidal thoughts if you have a mental health problem"

### Truth

Anybody can experience suicidal thoughts. Figures show that 1 in 5 adults have contemplated suicide at one point in their life. This means that suicidal thoughts should always be considered, asked about and not dismissed based on someone's mental health history.

Here are some of the common myths and misconceptions we regularly hear about suicide. It's important to understand the truth, so we can better support someone who is struggling or in crisis.

### Myth

"Everybody who is suicidal wants to die"

### Truth

Not everybody who is suicidal wants to die, but rather they don't want to live the life they have. This is an incredibly important distinction to make, as it gives hope that there are alternatives to suicide and things can (and will) get better.

### Myth

"There's nothing you can do to prevent someone from taking their own life"

### Truth

Suicide can be preventable when the right support is offered. Knowing the warning signs and how to support someone will greatly reduce the risk of them taking their own life. You have the potential to make a difference, no matter how small

# Supporting Others in Crisis

Once we spot the warning signs, it can be daunting to know what to say or do next. That's why we have developed the CLASS approach: a 5-step guide to supporting someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Connect, Listen, Assess, Support, Signpost

## Connect

Connect with the person you are concerned about. Make time to ask how they're doing and show empathy, care and concern. For ideas on what you could say, see the next page.

## Listen

Allow them time to talk things through and listen to what's being said. Your job is not to solve the problem or offer advice, but to listen and show you care.

Facilitate the conversation rather than leading it, and try not to minimise their feelings by comparing their experiences to others.

## Assess

When a person is feeling suicidal, we need to assess the situation carefully.

Establish if they have any intentions or have made any plans or preparations to end their life. Encourage them to think of the things that make life worth living (these are protective factors).

## Support

Make it clear that you're there to help and they are not a burden to you. Explore what support they already have and ways they can keep themselves safe.

Remember, finding a way forward should always be collaborative.

## Signpost

Connect them with services so they can access timely support. Main points of contact include their GP, NHS 111 (if out of hours) and confidential helplines (see "Need Help Now?").

Make a plan together about the actions they are going to take.

If they have made plans or preparations and feel they can't keep themselves safe:

- 1 Let them know you are concerned for their safety
- 2 Encourage them to call 999, or call 999 on their behalf
- 3 Continue talking to them until the ambulance arrives

# Spotlight on: “Connect”

While every step in the CLASS approach is important, we want to draw specific attention to the “C”: Connect. Connecting with someone, whether they’re a colleague, friend or even a stranger, to discuss suicide will undoubtedly feel daunting.

And despite your best intentions, it can sometimes be challenging to find out how that person is really feeling. They may be unfamiliar with talking about their mental health, concerned about what might happen if they open up or even ashamed of their feelings.

To navigate this conversation, try the following:

## The power of small talk

After an incredibly tough year, much of it spent in lockdown, many of us have not needed to utilise the power of small talk for a long time. But, as Samaritans reminded us in a recent campaign, we already have the skills to start a conversation with a stranger or friend that needs help.

If something doesn’t feel right, a little small talk and a simple question, like “Hello, what’s the time?”, can be all it takes to interrupt someone’s suicidal thoughts. If you feel something isn’t quite right and you think someone might need help, trust your instincts and start a conversation. You could save a life.

Learn more about Samaritans’  
Small Talk Saves Lives campaign [↗](#)

# What do I say?

Knowing what to say and how to say it can be the hardest part of talking to someone about suicide. Here are some phrases that might come in use.

I’ve noticed you’ve not been yourself. Is everything okay?

I’m glad you’ve told me – it must have been difficult going through it on your own.

These feelings are only temporary – we can get through this moment together.

Now might not be a good time to make a big decision. Let’s take a step back and consider the other options.

Have you thought about... (e.g. speaking to the Samaritans)? Should we make a plan together?

## Asking twice

It’s not always obvious when people are feeling suicidal, so it’s important that you’re able to look beyond a “Yes, I’m fine” response.

If someone says they’re fine, they might not be.

If you’re given this response, simply try asking again.

Asking “How are you really?” can make all the difference.



If most authorities on the subject of suicide agree that the majority of these deaths are preventable, then why aren't numbers reducing?

I founded The Jordan Legacy CIC following my son's death by suicide in December 2019.

I wanted to ensure that, in some way, I could help prevent other families having to experience the most devastating of losses – when someone they love takes their own life.

If we consider that suicide itself is a practical act, then it makes sense to suggest that we should introduce practical actions to prevent that act.

I believe that if our communities, workplaces, third sector organisations and the Government all join forces, then we can deliver a transformational change to how we prevent suicides.



**Steve Phillip**

Founder of The Jordan Legacy CIC

# How organisations can help

Every organisation has a role to play in preventing suicide. Below, you'll find three actionable steps that your organisation should take to drive a culture of compassion.

## 1. Normalise the mental health conversation



The best way break the stigma around mental health is to foster a psychologically safe working environment, where employees feel able to open up.

Maintain an open dialogue around mental health by:

- Ensuring your leaders regularly ask each employee how they are (twice), preferably in a 1:1 environment
- Encouraging leaders to share their own experiences of mental health issues - showing employees that it is okay to be vulnerable at work
- Raising awareness about mental health through internal communication channels like company-wide calls and newsletters

Build psychological safety in your organisation with this free guide [↗](#)

## 2. Prepare and support your line managers



Your line managers are often the first point of contact for struggling team members. Ensure they have the skills and resources they need to handle these situations by:

- Providing them with the knowledge they need to support struggling employees, e.g. a directory of local mental health support services
- Arming every line manager with a clear process to follow if they are made aware of an employee who may be at risk of suicide
- Hiring or promoting line managers who are emotionally intelligent, not just good at their jobs

## 3. Empower everyone to become mental health champions



Support your employees in supporting each other, by making mental health training a mandatory requirement for all your employees.

By doing this, you'll empower your employees to be proactive when it comes to spotting the signs of poor mental health and signposting co-workers when needed.

If you're worried about the cost of this, explore e-learning opportunities, which are often more cost-efficient and can be completed by employees at a time that suits them.

# About confidentiality

When someone shares something with us, we should treat it with the strictest confidence.

However, confidentiality has its limits, and when a person is at risk of harming themselves, the limits of confidentiality are reached.

In this situation, we should do everything we can to keep them safe, including informing a relevant person or calling 999. This ensures they will get access to timely and appropriate help.



# The language of suicide

The way we talk and the words we use has a huge impact on the way we perceive the world. So, when talking about suicide, language really does matter.

For example, you should avoid the phrase “commit suicide” because this relates to an era when suicide was a crime.

Similarly, avoid using the words “successful” or “unsuccessful” as this connotes an achievement of something positive, despite the tragic outcomes. We’ve added alternatives into the table below.

## SAY THIS

## INSTEAD OF THIS

✓ Died by suicide

✗ Committed suicide

✓ Suicide death

✗ Successful attempt

✓ Suicide attempt

✗ Unsuccessful attempt

✓ Person living with suicidal thoughts or behavior

✗ Suicide ideator or attempter

✓ Suicide

✗ Completed suicide

Find more resources for journalists  
and media here [↗](#)



Ross was always the life and soul of the party. Or at least that's what many people believed. We knew different – beneath the facade he had long been fighting severe depression.

But even I, his dad, didn't realise quite how desperate our wonderful son had become.

In the early hours of the 21st February 2021 came the call that would change our world forever. Ross had died at the age of 31.

Our boy - the warm, fun-loving, hard-working and dedicated family man had gone. I had been as proud of my son as any dad could have been.

By the time we had driven the two hours through the night to Ross's house his body had already been taken away. A farewell letter he had left for his family had been taken by the police.

My empty world felt even emptier and when I saw the familiar photographs of Ross holding his three-year-old son I fell to the floor. Alongside it was a photograph of me holding Ross when he was a boy.

Six months on I still have no words to describe the pain. Despite having already gone through ten years of anxiety and depression, Ross had been put on a six-month waiting list for therapy. We finally got to read his farewell letter and in it he asked his family to campaign for better mental health provision. We do that now in his name and in his honour.

RIP Ross McCarthy.



**Mike McCarthy**

Campaigner for mental health awareness,  
journalist and media consultant.

# Guide contributors



HARRY BLISS

In 2018, Harry lost a friend and mentor to suicide, due to a short bout of stress. As the CEO and Co-Founder of Champion Health, he is driven every day by the mission to prevent tragedies like this happening to others.

[Find out more](#)



STEVE PHILLIP

After losing his 34-year-old son Jordan to suicide, Steve set up The Jordan Legacy CIC to make communities, individuals and businesses aware of how they can save lives by taking practical action to prevent suicides happening.

[Find out more](#)



MIKE MCCARTHY

In 2021, Mike lost his son Ross to suicide. He now campaigns for better mental health provision by setting up a Talk Club in his local area of Sheffield, and is raising money for CALM.

[Find out more](#)



ALICE HENDY

After her only sibling, Josh, took his own life at the age of just 21, Alice founded R;ppl, an online monitoring tool designed intercept harmful online content related to self-harm and suicide.

[Find out more](#)

# A final thought

Thank you from us all at Champion Health for taking your time to prioritise suicide prevention.

We truly hope that you never have to use the information in this guide. But, if you do, we hope you'll feel better equipped to make a difference - no matter how small.

Remember that a little support goes a long way. Your actions could save someone's life.

## About Champion Health

Champion Health was founded by Harry Bliss in 2018 powered by a mission to change and save lives. The company provide innovative, evidence-based workplace health solutions, developed by world-leading academics, GPs and technology professionals. Through blended expertise, Champion Health is proud to have prevented suicides in the workplace and improved health outcomes across the UK.

For more information, please contact [info@championhealth.co.uk](mailto:info@championhealth.co.uk) or visit [www.championhealth.co.uk](http://www.championhealth.co.uk).

## Free resources used to develop this guide:

Business in the community  
[www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/suicide-prevention-toolkit](http://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/suicide-prevention-toolkit)

International Association for Suicide Prevention:  
[www.iasp.info/wspd2020/wspd-brochure](http://www.iasp.info/wspd2020/wspd-brochure)

World Health Organisation (WHO):  
[www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide)

Samaritans:  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Workplace health  
that makes a difference.**

**CHAMPION**  
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