

08 January 2019

Talking safely about suicide can save lives and set the path to recovery

No one is immune to mental health conditions, but there are pathways to recovery, **Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** says.

Ms Harman said fame, fortune, excellence in your career, respect from peers or public adulation were no defence to developing anxiety or depression.

“While mental health conditions can happen to anyone, there are steps individuals and their loved ones can take to prevent or manage a mental health condition and suicidal thoughts,” Ms Harman said.

“If you feel things are getting out of control, speak to someone you trust, see a GP or mental health professional, or contact a helpline.

“People who have thought about suicide say the most important thing family, friends and colleagues can do is listen, show they care, and offer support.”

Ms Harman said it was important for everyone in Australia to recognise signs in themselves and others.

These might include:

- Expressing sense of hopelessness or no hope for the future
- Isolation or feeling alone – “No one understands me”
- Aggressiveness and irritability – “Leave me alone”
- Possessing lethal means – medication, weapons
- Negative view of self – “I’m worthless”
- Drastic changes in mood and behaviour
- Frequently talking about death – “If I died, would you miss me?”
- Self-harming behaviours like cutting
- Risk-taking behaviours – “I’ll try anything, I’m not afraid to die”
- Getting affairs in order, such as making funeral arrangements
- Giving things away (clothes, expensive gifts) – “When I’m gone, I want you to have this”.
- Substance abuse
- Feeling like a burden to others – “You’d be better off without me”
- Talking about suicide – “Sometimes I feel like I just want to die”

“If you are worried about someone, have a conversation with them. Listen to the person without judgment and offer them support,” Ms Harman said.

“Take what they say seriously and don’t be afraid to ask whether they are contemplating suicide. Speaking about suicide does not encourage a person to take their own life.

“Keep the person safe and encourage and support the person to seek professional help. And, of course, make sure you look after yourself too.”

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For tips on how to start a conversation, go to the Beyond Blue [#YouCanTalk page](#).

Mental health professionals are available at the Beyond Blue Support Service via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).