

in Suicide Prevention

Many people are drawn to 'do something' with their lived experience of suicide. Whether you live with your own suicidal ideation, have made an attempt on your life, cared for a loved one through a suicidal crisis or have been bereaved through suicide, the insights and wisdom gained through that experience does have the power to positively impact suicide prevention and potentially save a life.

Having a lived experience of suicide can change us quite profoundly. For some, it can leave them feeling devastated and confused about what it means to them, while for others it is a time to reflect on life and its value. Finding the balance between being able to think constructively about your experience and managing the overwhelming emotions is tricky, and the thought of feeling vulnerable is daunting for some.

There may come a time when you feel that you would like to contribute in some way to suicide prevention. You may not be sure of what your role might be, what it might mean to you both emotionally and mentally, and what the implications are for your family and friends. But we can assure you that sharing your lived experience, when done appropriately and with purpose, is a powerful tool for changing attitudes and opinions, furthering education about suicide prevention, raising awareness and leaving lasting impressions.

Of course, the most important consideration is that you are ready, and that your involvement is a rewarding and positive experience. It is without question difficult to talk about suicide when it has and does impact your life so profoundly, and our feelings can change over time and vary depending on the time of year and significant dates. It's important to realise that being involved in suicide prevention does not mean 365 days a year, you are able to choose the nature and frequency of your involvement.

We hope that working through this document will help you clarify your thoughts about becoming involved in suicide prevention, and if you decide to take that step, then Roses in the Ocean is able to provide you with training and support to assist you.

HAS IT BEEN ENOUGH TIME?

The more we work with people with a lived experience of suicide, the more it becomes apparent that time is different for all and there is no rule book to follow on what is the right time to get involved after your experience. For some people, they are ready to become involved just months after their lived experience, while for others it can take years.

The most important consideration is your personal level of vulnerability, the scaffolding of support you have in place, and your self-care rituals. Levels of vulnerability can change over time as suicidality and grief may resurface and when this happens, it is important to know that stepping back and withdrawing from suicide prevention activities at that time is the right thing to do. If you believe you are ready we will happily discuss with you in more detail what it is like to be involved, and this will help contribute to your final decision. Remember, your involvement needs to be the right thing at the right time for you.

Here are some things to consider:

What impact has talking about your lived experience of suicide had on your emotional, mental, physical wellbeing in recent times?

Are there particular times when you know you feel more vulnerable, when your lived experience is just that bit closer to the surface than at other times?

Are you aware of any particular words, conversations or anything else that can cause a strong emotional response for you?

What is your energy and drive like after you discuss your experience? Does it take time to recover or is it lessening as you talk more about it?

Are you able to speak about your experience with suicide without feeling teary all the time, anxious, overwhelmed with grief or anger?

Have you spoken about your desire to take part in suicide research with your own network of family and friends? If yes, reflect on those conversations and possible impacts. If no, what are your thoughts on doing so?

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

It's not always easy to identify your motivation for wanting to get involved in suicide prevention. You need to look inwards and perhaps discuss how you feel with a close family member or friend to help you. Try not to be critical or judgmental when working through your motivation, it's your unique experience, so there is no set rule. Ask yourself "who is going to benefit from my involvement"? Usually you will find that you get a mix of yourself and your community benefiting from your involvement and that's a very common outcome.

Which motivation is the most important to you? Do you believe being involved in suicide prevention research will meet your current motivation?

When becoming involved in suicide prevention, you must be prepared that people will have different perspectives on suicide. It's a complex issue and no two experiences are the same for many different reasons. Those who have attempted suicide and those who are bereaved from suicide look at it from different perspectives and this can create strong emotions.

Have you experienced differing views on suicide to your own? How have you reacted? Has your ability to see differing views changed as time has moved on?

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

It's extremely important to us that you understand it's perfectly alright at any time, whether it's during training, before you participate in your first suicide prevention initiative or speaking engagement, or at some point throughout your time playing a role in suicide prevention, that it's ok to say that you need a break.

We understand this will be a tough call for you and we know part of your motivation for being involved is preventing others going through the same experience. We recognise you want good to come out of such a difficult experience and this might drive your determination to continue, however we must be cognisant about the impact your involvement is having on you and your loved ones.

Remember we are dealing with a complex issue and not just one person has the responsibility to stop it, we all do as a community.

To discuss your potential involvement further, please contact us on 1300 411 461 or read more on our website at rosesintheocean.com.au/lived-experience-of-suicide/

NATIONAL HELPLINES AND WEBSITES



PCC Warmline
1800 77 7337
rosesintheocean.com.au



Lifeline
13 11 14
lifeline.org.au



Headspace
1800 650 890
headspace.org.au



Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467
suicidecallbackservice.org.au



QLife
1800 184 527
qlife.org.au



13YARN
13 92 76
13yarn.org.au



ReachOut
au.reachout.com



Kid's Helpline
1800 551 800
kidshelpline.com.au



Beyond Blue
1300 22 46 36
beyondblue.org.au



Open Arms
1800 011 046
openarms.gov.au

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