

What to do if you are concerned about someone with suicidal feelings?

If you are concerned about someone with suicidal feelings, phone the Samaritans or consult your GP.

SAMARITANS
1850 60 90 90 (Ireland)
08457 90 90 90 (UK)

Your local parish and parish priest will be able to offer pastoral and social support. Serious mental disorders will require psychiatric and multidisciplinary care, and/or skilled counselling.

Details of further resources and support can be found on the Samaritans website www.samaritans.org and also on our own Day for Life website www.dayforlife.org

Turning the Tide of Suicide
www.3ts.ie

National Office for Suicide prevention
www.nosp.ie

Irish Association of Suicidology
www.ias.ie

Pieta House
www.pieta.ie



Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland and England & Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition: www.dayforlife.org

Day for Life Prayer

We thank you Lord for the gift of life. Help us to appreciate the unique dignity of every human person and the individual contribution they make to the world, in fulfilment of the task you give them. Enable us by your grace to promote their well-being, serving you in one another in a spirit of generosity, through Christ Jesus Our Lord. Amen.



'We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain.'
(Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* n.31)

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'You are precious in my sight' ISAIAH 43:4



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IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLÍCEACH ÉIREANN

Day for Life – the day dedicated to celebrating the dignity of life from conception to natural death – will this year focus on suicide. There are around 6,000 deaths by suicide in Ireland and the UK each year. In recent years this figure has been falling, except in Northern Ireland and Wales.

Building upon last year's theme of mental health, this year's Day for Life aims to raise awareness of the vital role to be played by families and supportive parish communities in sustaining those who may be struggling to cope. The Day also aims to help reduce the number of myths associated with mental illness, depression and suicide. It emphasises the importance of encouraging people to seek professional help if they are troubled by persistent suicidal feelings.

The Church believes that life is worth living

Life matters. It is a precious gift to be cherished. Our fulfilment and destiny come from a living relationship with Jesus Christ through faith, nourished by the sacraments and the support of the Church community. 'I have come to give you life to the full' (John 10:10). He invites us to ask him for this Life. The message of the Gospel is that, whatever has happened to us, and whatever we have done, we can never be separated from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Pain, even tragedy – are never God's last word.

Someone may feel that life is so painful or hopeless that it is not worth living. But with appropriate help and support these feelings do subside. 'Suicide should never be romanticised, promoted or encouraged. On the other hand, attempting suicide is typically the act of a desperate person and it should be greeted with compassion rather than with blame.' (*Cherishing Life*, 181)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: 'We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives.' (n. 2283)

Why some people think about suicide

Suicidal thoughts are not uncommon but most people don't act on these thoughts and feelings of despair. For some, these thoughts and feelings may happen after experiencing a bereavement, relationship breakdown, the loss of a job, financial pressures or following emotional or sexual abuse. For others, it is a profound fear that they will be unable to cope with whatever has disturbed their peace of mind. Sometimes these thoughts occur without any apparent reason.

People with serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and clinical

depression, may feel that their life is no longer worth living, even that they are a burden to their family. Others fear that they will experience great suffering in dying. What is needed is a response of love and care by family, friends and the wider community, and the assistance that good palliative care can offer. Assisted suicide is not the answer; it would only compound any sense of hopelessness and undermine the absolute value of every human life. Assisted suicide is illegal, and a change to the law would place pressure on vulnerable people – including those who are elderly, disabled, depressed,

'The Church is increasingly aware of the pressures that bring people to attempt suicide and which reduce the moral culpability of their actions.'

(Cherishing Life, 182)

depression or people who are dependant on drugs or alcohol are more likely to try to take their own lives. They may need specialist and sometimes intensive medical and psychosocial care either in hospital or in the community. Sometimes they may have little insight into their condition and urgent specialist help will need to be requested by a family member, friend or colleague.

Some people who are terminally ill or severely disabled may feel their life is no

longer worth living, even that they are a burden to their family. Others fear that they will experience great suffering in dying. What is needed is a response of love and care by family, friends and the wider community, and the assistance that good palliative care can offer.

Sometimes suicidal feelings may arise from a sense of loss or abandonment by God, worthlessness, a lack of meaning in life and an inner emptiness. Or it may be an overwhelming sense of guilt, or of low self-worth, of insecurity and purposelessness. Prayer, opportunities for spiritual conversation, the sacrament of reconciliation and the support of family and the parish community are very important.