

Recognising Those at Risk

Older people who take their own lives often either directly or indirectly indicate their intention to kill themselves to others. Unfortunately people either play down, or do not recognise the real significance of what has been said or indicated to them. By recognising the 'signs' and 'symptoms' early on we can prevent suicide from occurring and greatly improve the circumstances and quality of life for an older person. The clues that an older person is considering suicide can be verbal, behavioural and situational. The presence of depression or other mood disorder is also highly significant:

Verbal

- End centred talk, directly expressing the wish to die or takes one's own life.
- Indirect talk, such as talking about things as if they will not be around to see or participate in them.

Behavioural

- Hoarding medication
- Making or changing a will
- A sudden interest in giving things away and putting one's affairs in order
- Suddenly attending or re-establishing contact with a religious faith; typically attending the local place of worship
- Self neglect and losing interest in life and household tasks

Situational and Symptomatic

- Sudden changes in circumstance; the death of a partner or close friend, retirement, moving home, or the diagnosis of a serious illness
- The presence of Depression or other Mood Disorder
- Sudden recovery from a deep Depression
- Changes in sleep and eating habits
- The presence of tension, agitation or guilt
- Shunning company and isolating oneself

