

## Self-Harm and Suicide Risk

*These two topics are particularly serious and affect millions of people in North America. If you or someone you know is struggling with self-harm or suicidality, please contact a healthcare professional (e.g., psychologist, counsellor, doctor, nurse) as soon as possible. Do not use the information below as a substitute for professional help.*

Anxiety, depression, stress, grief, sadness, and other emotions can leave us looking for a way out. Things that relieve the intensity of the emotion are called *coping mechanisms* or *coping strategies*. Coping strategies can include generally positive activities, such as exercise, talking to a friend, meditation, playing games, and reading. Coping can also be generally unhealthy, such as good things done to excess, substance misuse, and self-harm.

### Self-Harm

Self-harm is used to relieve emotional distress by creating physical pain as a distraction or alternative point of focus. Self-harming can lead to riskier behaviours, accidental death, development of suicide ideation, or long-term tissue damage. Self-harm does not necessarily mean a person wants to attempt or complete suicide.

If you are self-harming, contact a registered counsellor or psychologist to help find other ways to deal with your distress. In moments of crisis when you are self-harming or considering it, try calling the BC Crisis Centre phone line (1-800-784-2433). They take calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and services are available in 140 languages.

Working through self-harm behaviours should be done with the help of a registered counsellor or psychologist. With their help, you may be encouraged to consider what things are contributing to your distress and what triggers exist that encourage you to self-harm. One possible approach is to substitute in other non-damaging, alternative coping strategies that provide an intense physical sensation, without the same risks as self-harm (e.g., holding ice cubes, intense physical exercise, biting into a lemon).

Self-Harm Resources:

<https://calmharm.co.uk/>  
<https://keltymentalhealth.ca/self-injury>  
<https://foundrybc.ca/resource/self-injury/>  
<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/self-harm>

### Suicide

Suicide ideation (thinking about killing yourself) and attempting suicide is a serious and widespread issue. According to Statistics Canada, suicide is the second leading cause of death for the 15-34 age group.

If you or someone you know is thinking about or planning suicide, please reach out immediately to a healthcare professional or trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, or coach – anyone that you know will listen to you. If they don't, ask someone else.

You can always call the BC Crisis Centre (1-800-784-2433) for help at any time of the day or night.

*What happens after if I tell my coach that I'm thinking about suicide?*

Firstly, we all understand that there is a difference between joking, thinking, or talking about death and wanting to be dead. However, if a coach has a reason to believe that you may be at risk, they are required to report to your parents, family services, or health or safety representative. Know that these steps are taken to help get you through an incredibly difficult time. Afterwards, these same adults can help you with changes in your life to improve your situation.

Again, if you are considering hurting yourself or completing suicide, please contact the Crisis Center or a healthcare professional as soon as possible.

Suicide Resources:

<https://kelymentalhealth.ca/suicide>

<https://foundrybc.ca/resource/suicide/>

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/suicide>