

Carer Specific Support



How do we get URGENT support?

If you believe the person you care for's life is in imminent danger, contact 000.

"I really wasn't sure what to do. I just knew something wasn't right. He wouldn't talk to me other than to say he was 'over it' so I just called an ambulance. Now, I'm glad I did."

M. Fallin, Mayfield, TAS

How do we get IMMEDIATE support?

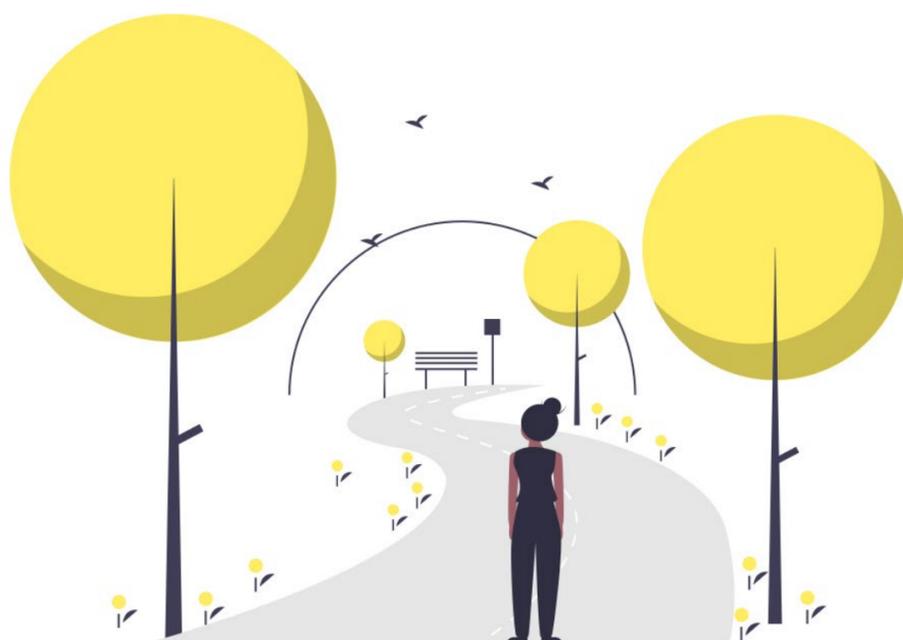
If there is no imminent risk to life but you are still concerned, worried, or unsure, immediate support could be contacting:

1. Crisis Assessment Team
2. Crisis Helpline
3. Health Professional

During this time, safety is paramount. Where possible, have someone stay with the person or keep them connected with them.

"My husband called a crisis line and they told us exactly what we could do."

R. Tindall, Joondalup, WA



How do we get ONGOING support?

Sometimes support is required in an ongoing capacity. It's important to remember this is normal.

Ongoing support could be in the form of:

1. Second Steps Service Suite
2. Psychiatry/Psychology/Counseling
3. Psychosocial Support
4. Online Forums

Chat with a Second Steps Lived Experience Support Person who could help you or the person you provide care to access appropriate services.

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What do I need to KNOW?

Suicidal thoughts should be taken seriously

It's ok if the person you provide care to is having thoughts about wanting to die or wanting to end their life and it's important for them and you to be able to speak with someone about them

Thoughts to end one's life are usually a result of not being able to cope, feeling burdened or burdensome, an experience of intense emotional pain, or a need to escape life as it presently is. If the person you provide care to is experiencing suicidal thoughts, aim to validate how they feel and avoid trying to solve their problems immediately.

It can be helpful to remember that suicidal thoughts are experienced by others, so the person you provide care to is not alone in how they are feeling. You may wish to reassure the individual of this fact

Talking about suicidal thoughts with a supportive friend or family member or a professional can be helpful. As a person who provides care, try to encourage conversation and be ready an open to listening without judgement

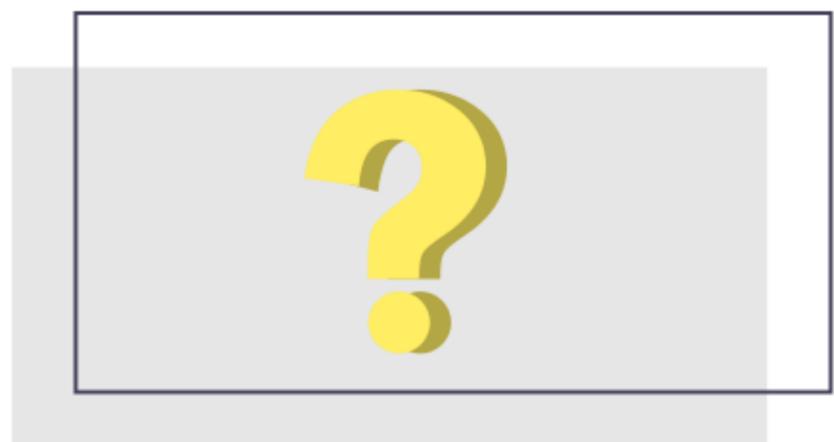
Suicidal thoughts don't tend to stay for long if the person is able to talk about the thoughts and get some help managing life's challenges differently

Having suicidal thoughts doesn't always mean that the person you care about wants to die. Many people who experience thoughts of suicide want to continue living but feel they're unable to deal with their current feelings or problems. Try to validate their problems rather than minimising them.

Reassure the person that as much as it feels like there's no other option, usually there is, and there are plenty of people to help them find alternate solutions

Attempted suicide and suicidal thoughts can have an impact on those who give care to the individual along with their friends, family members, and community. If you're feeling distressed or uncertain, support is also available for carers.

Click [here](#) to find out more about Carer Support.



"I realised I couldn't cope with everything on my own. This is when I invested in support for myself."

T. Cairney, Woolloomooloo, NSW

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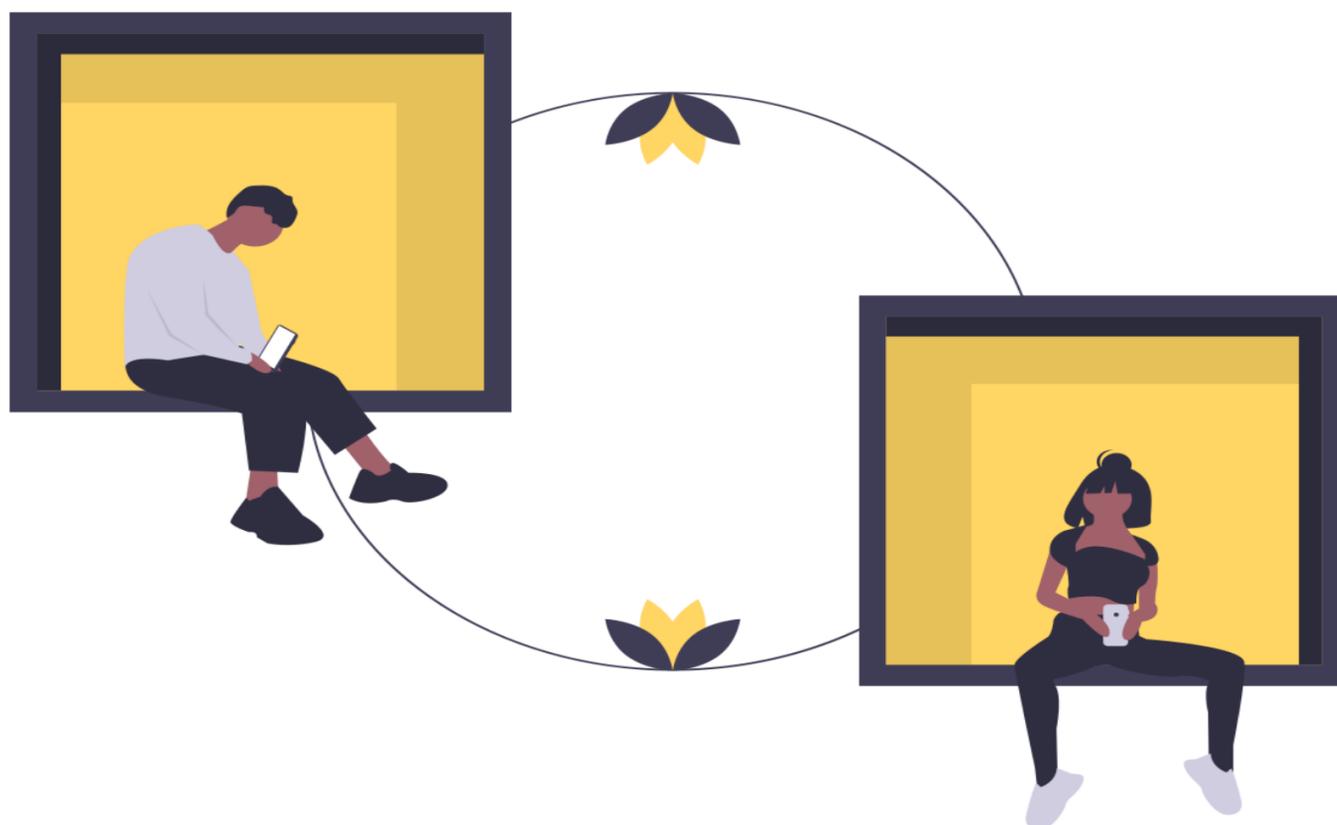
How can I best SUPPORT someone during CRISIS?

There is no specific manual for giving support to someone when they are experiencing severe distress or suicidal thoughts. Some useful strategies which you may find helpful are:

1. Knowing the warning signs

Some of the warning signs that a person could be heading toward a crisis are:

- Thoughts of suicide or self-harm
- Engaging in self-harm, or engaging with more frequency/intensity than usual
- Substance misuse
- Speaking about hopelessness, inability to cope, life not feeling worthwhile, feelings of being trapped or unable to escape a situation or their life's problems
- Increased signs of anxiety, depression, recklessness, anger
- Withdrawal from daily life or lack of desire/energy to participate in daily life
- Progressive or sudden changes in mood



2. Asking the person directly about suicide

It can feel daunting to have a conversation about suicide with someone we care for. In the past it was thought that perhaps speaking about suicide might increase someone's risk. Instead, what we now know is that talking about suicide has no impact on a person's risk of suicide, and that having the conversation could change or even save a life. Speak with compassion, concern, and without judgment but be direct with your question. This will increase the potential of the person opening up to you about how they are feeling. Let the person know that their thoughts are ok and that you'd like to be there for them and help them get support.

3. Safety is paramount

When a person is experiencing crisis, your and their safety is of utmost importance. Avoid leaving the person you care for alone, where possible. Ask the person directly about how safe they are feeling and if they have plans to hurt themselves. If the person does have a plan, ask them what the plan is. Where possible, try to remove from the situation and means of harm. These could be in the form of medications, sharp objects, weapons, chemicals etc. Seek support for the person. Options for support can vary depending on whether this is the first time this person has experienced a crisis or not. If in doubt, contact a crisis helpline or emergency services who will be able to talk you through the options available to you and the person in crisis.

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How can I best SUPPORT someone during CRISIS?

4. Be there

It's highly likely that a person experiencing a crisis or having thoughts of self-harm or suicide is feeling alone, vulnerable, confused, helpless, and or scared. These feelings can add to their distress. Being there for a person in crisis can simply mean listening, comforting, reminding the person you want to be there for them, reassuring the person that they will get through this. As best as is possible try to remain calm and openminded.

5. Support yourself

Experiencing someone else go through a crisis can bring up a lot of emotion for a care giver. Once the person has received the support they require, it can be useful to check-in with yourself.

- Do you need some time out?
- Do you need to chat with someone?

Your wellbeing is really important if you're going to give ongoing care to someone after a crisis. Support services are available that are specific to care givers. Second Steps offers a variety of services for those who give care to someone who has survived a suicide attempt.

6. Be prepared

Once a crisis is over it can help to think about what you might want to do if it were to happen again. Having a crisis prevention plan in place can be helpful for both you and the person you give care to. You can access a crisis prevention plan template from our website. It's a tool that you can complete yourself or many find it beneficial to complete with the person they are providing care to.



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How can I best SUPPORT someone during CRISIS?

Supporting someone after a suicide attempt can be challenging. You may have a lot of questions, a lot of emotions, and even a lot of concerns. When a person returns home after a suicide attempt, it can be useful not to have too many expectations of yourself or them. Things may progress slowly in the beginning as you both find your footing again.

Some things that could be useful are:

- Letting the person know that you want to support them and finding out from the person how you can best do this

- Letting the person know that you are available if and when they feel like talking

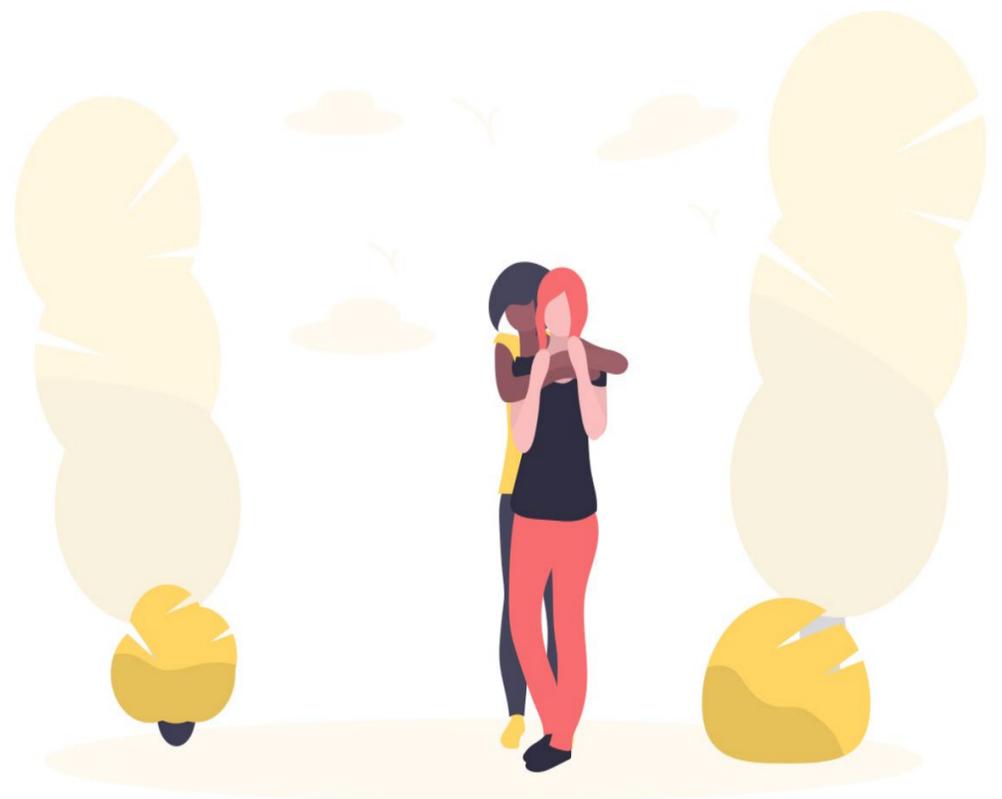
- Offering to support the person with practical tasks: appointments, day-to-day living needs, responding to calls or messages on their behalf, dispensing or arranging to have dispensed any medications the person may be taking

- Listening to the person, without judgment or trying to problem solve, particularly if they want to talk about the attempt or what led to it

It can also be useful to set boundaries very early on

- Let the person know what you are willing and able to do in order to support them and what you are not willing or able to do

We can never be with someone every minute of the day and we can never be responsible for another person's actions. As a loved one or someone who cares for the person who has attempted, it can be easy and understandable to slip into hypervigilance. Excessive monitoring of the person cannot last forever, and it's usually not what the person wants or needs. Instead, encourage the person to let you know if and when they might be feeling unsafe.



As the time passes and the person has begun to engage with external supports it can be useful to support the person to develop and maintain a routine. You may find that the person isn't willing or able to return to all the activities they used to partake in. Many people choose not to return to work immediately, some don't wish to see friends or other family members for a while, others may have little desire to engage in hobbies they used to be interested in. It's important to acknowledge how the person feels about these things and let them know you are able to support them if and when they're ready to return to life as it was or to develop new interests etc.

It's not uncommon for a person who has survived a suicide attempt to gain a new perspective on life. In fact, many people who have survived a suicide attempt have gone on to create a completely different yet still meaningful life for themselves.

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What happens AFTER a suicide attempt?

If someone you care about or for has experienced a suicide attempt, it's likely that they've visited a hospital emergency department, been in contact with emergency services or a CAT Team or have reached out to you or another family member or friend. If they haven't done any of the above, encourage the person to do so to ensure their physical and emotional wellbeing can be assessed.

Depending on the help sought you may find yourself with a variety of next steps. Usually, in hospital the individual will have their physical and emotional health attended to. As the carer, you may be asked questions or required to complete forms. The hospital staff may also ask you about the individual's ability to remain safe after leaving hospital and what support they and you may require when you leave hospital. In some instances, it will be necessary for the individual to stay in hospital for a while to receive further, specialist treatment.

During their stay, a plan for ongoing support should be made in preparation for them to go home. This might involve connection to a support worker or case worker, follow up appointments with a Psychiatrist or other health professional. It's important that you and the individual feel confident that you have adequate support back at home and that you both know who to contact should they experience suicidal thoughts or distress again, or should you need assistance as their carer.



A visit to the emergency department or contact with a local CAT Team will have a similar outcome but will be dependent on the individual needs of the person to stay safe and well at home.

Being at home can be a little overwhelming. Both you and or anyone else in the household may be quite concerned for the person and have a lot of questions, or even feel quite helpless. If the person lives on their own it may be necessary to arrange for someone to stay with them or to at least be available to them in the short-term. to think about how you will get through this on your own. The most important thing to remember is that when the person does return home, support for the individual and those directly impacted is still available. We encourage remaining connected with supports for as long as is needed.

A person who has survived a suicide attempt will require continued support. Support can come in many forms, and you can discover more about the supports we offer at Second Steps on our website. We can also provide personal assistance to help the individual or their carer find suitable supports as part of our Individual Support.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Individual Support.

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What's it like back AT HOME after a suicide attempt?

The first few days or even few weeks following a loved one's suicide attempt can be exhausting. Try to be gentle and kind with yourself. You may be experiencing a range of different emotions or your mind may be full of thoughts, confusion, and questions. Give yourself time and take things slowly.

It can be difficult but try to set boundaries with the individual and, where possible continue to see to your own needs as well. Take time to schedule appointments that you may need for yourself and, if possible, setup a network of supports specifically for you. This may include a therapist, a peer support person, a support group, or even just self care services.

It's not unusual for suicidal thoughts to re-occur in the months after a suicide attempt. If the person you're caring for experiences these thoughts, encourage them to speak with a health professional about them. Suicidal thoughts don't have to mean they are experiencing another crisis. They might just be an indication that things are getting stressful.

"When she returned home, I felt guilty. I kept asking what I could have done differently. Eventually, after seeking support for myself, I realised it was better to focus on what I could do now and moving forward."

C. Pauls, Claremont, WA



"Once I had a good support network, I didn't feel so alone anymore. It really helped to be able to speak with other carers."

K. Spiriakou, Torrensville, SA



You might like to participate in face to face support with others who have been through a similar experience. For this, Second Steps offers Carer Support, uniquely designed for carers of a suicide attempt survivor. This open group service gives you an opportunity to connect with others, including our lived experience support persons, participate in discussions about your and others' experiences, and discover some simple skills that may help you in your carer role.

Click [here](#) to find out more about Carer Support.

In addition to health professionals and other people in the individual's support network, there are also tools that can be used to assist them after a suicide attempt. Many of the tools we, with lived experience, have found helpful can be discovered in our online learning programs as part of our Online Support. Many of our carers find it helpful to use these tools themselves or to share them with the recipient of their care.

Click [here](#) to find out more about Online Support.

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How do I talk about THEIR EXPERIENCE with them or others?

There are no hard and fast rules around communicating about suicide. One of the most important things to remember is that you want the conversation to be safe, honest, open, and relevant to the person you are speaking with or listening to. As a person providing care, it's also important, where possible, to seek permission from the individual before sharing their experience with others.

1. Readiness

Ask the person you are providing care to If they are ready to speak with you or others about their experience. If they are ready, be willing and open to listening without judgement. It's natural that you may be eager for them to talk because you care and are probably feeling concerned or confused. Try not to rush the person into talking when they're not ready, as this may result in emotions being heightened or the person closing off completely.

2. Questions

Be prepared with questions you may have but also be prepared that the individual may not have all the answers straight away. Aim to ask questions overtime. Remind the person you are always available if ever they would like to talk or that there are others they can chat with if preferred.

3. Stigma

A lot of work has been done to help raise awareness of suicide and to reduce the stigma attached to it. That's not to say that everyone will be open to talking about experiences of suicide. For a person who has survived a suicide attempt it can take time for them to process their own thoughts, feelings, and the situation. It can also be unsettling for the individual to try to explain their experience.



4. Uncertainty

If you're still unsure about how to talk with the person, chat with one of our Lived Experience Support Persons via the Online Community. They could give you examples of conversations that they or others with lived experience of a have had. Click [here](#) to learn more about our Online Support.

5. Communicating with Others

You may find yourself in a situation where you need to explain the person's experience to others. This might be other family members, friends, or even employers. Where possible, seek the individual's permission about what you share. Consider the person you are telling and keep the information relevant to age, understanding, relationship proximity. Don't avoid getting support for yourself just because you may not be able to share all the details of the person's experience.



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What **SUPPORT** is available for **CARERS** of a **suicide attempt survivor**?

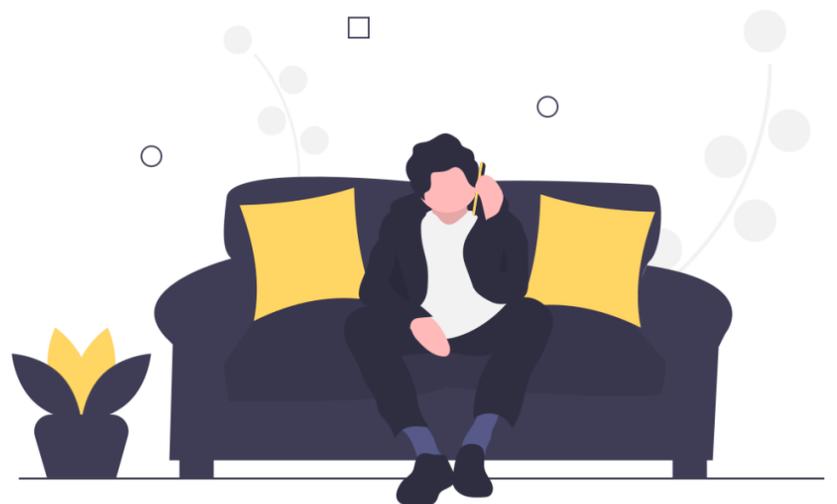


Supporting yourself when you are giving care to someone is crucial. It's common to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, exhausted, or worried.

Seeking support for yourself from family or friends can be useful. Family and friends can help take your mind off of worry, they can help lift your mood when you're feeling sad or depressed, they can help with providing support to the person you are caring for to lessen the load and reduce exhaustion.

Outside of family and friends, there are also other supports available for carers. These can range from respite, to counselling, to support groups, to online resources, and even over-the phone chats. It can be helpful to try a few different styles of support and see what works best for you.

Most importantly, reassure yourself from time to time that you're doing the best you can and that getting assistance to do this is perfectly acceptable.



"Meeting other people who had been through something similar changed my perception on how well I was doing as a carer. It put my mind at ease to hear I was doing something right."

D. Gascit, Zuccoli, NT



Second Steps offers a variety of supports to carers. Online support lets you connect with others who have a shared experience, connect with our lived experience support persons, participate in online discussions, attend live webinars, and discover relevant skills and strategies via our online learning program.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Online Support.

Carer Support is a workshop specific to carers, held in a group setting, and facilitated by our lived experience support persons. The workshops provide human-based connections, discussions around experiences, and a chance to step away from the daily routine.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Carer Support.