



## FAQ: Crisis & Suicide

*Why should a university care if a student is having a personal crisis?*

- Studying requires full commitment – it isn't possible to separate studying from the rest of life. Everything students experience influences their studies.
- Difficulties in studying or failed exams can harm a person's confidence and their sense of self and successful studies are a core interest at a university.

*Shouldn't suicidal thoughts be dealt with in the family as a private matter?*

- Families and universities do not rule each other out when offering help. A higher education institution can take on its share of responsibility and provide care.

*Isn't suicide a personal decision that an institution should respect?*

- In the spirit of responsibility and fellowship, such a decision definitely concerns a university; an individual's autonomy is not lessened by this concern.
- Crises and suicides adversely affect a number of people, even where there is no obvious connection between them and the affected person.
- Many suicidal people give signals to people in their social network – signals that can and should be addressed.

*We have a good health care system. Shouldn't we leave these unpleasant things to the experts?*

- Our health care system is very important, but the social environment of students can offer valuable help in addition to medical approaches.
- Medical experts generally are not involved until a later point in time, after the problems have escalated.

*Shouldn't it be a supervisor who addresses the problem?*

- Crises concern us all. Looking away doesn't help anybody.
- Not all supervisors have skills in this area.



*How does prevention work? The problems generally only make sense in hindsight.*

- Primary prevention means having good-quality structures; for example, there should be advisory services and offices should have friendly personnel.
- Secondary prevention is done by paying attention and addressing the problems in a good way – the way active observers can.
- Addressing a crisis is important to prevent an escalation and to reduce the risk of suicide attempts.

*Won't it just get worse when people talk about it? Maybe talking about suicide is what gives a person the idea to actually take their life.*

- Talking about suicide is a sensitive issue, being so close to themes like failure, inability to cope, and death. But experts are convinced that we should openly address any suspicion of crisis and suicide.
- Trust your intuition that "something isn't right."

*Don't people who commit suicide just want to hurt the people closest to them?*

- There is a fine line between anger and care; threatening with such dramatic action is a serious burden in any kind of relationship.
- Signaling or attempting suicide is the expression of a very serious crisis.

*Does a person who is always complaining and threatening really deserve to be taken seriously?*

- Complainers are rarely liked.
- Crises and suicidal thoughts are often communicated unclearly; that is why it is important to remain in friendly contact and address the issue.

*Don't we all have a crisis now and then? Can it really be that bad?*

- A true crisis reduces a person's self-competence and goes beyond what we know and can deal with. That is why outside help is necessary.



*What should you say when you are worried about someone?*

- It is best to emphasize that it is your own concern, and that you continue to ask questions because you'd like to know more.
  - I have noticed you don't come to our events so much anymore – is everything okay?
  - You seem very different – or am I wrong? Is something troubling you? Would you like to tell me what it is?
  - You seem very tense and like you're under a lot of pressure. Am I right?
  - You say, you'd like to die – have you already thought seriously about suicide?
  - You can't stand it anymore. Your life doesn't make any sense. What would have to change for you to be able to keep going?

*Can anyone really prevent a suicide if a person is intent on taking their life?*

- There is often a great deal of ambivalence and room to influence someone who says they want to die. Talking to them is always about gaining time.
- Not now, not today, maybe never – the future is open.

*If someone feels life is meaningless, isn't that their own business? You can't help them anymore.*

In such a phase, it is helpful to ask concrete questions – for example: What would have to change for you to be able to keep going? – or to make concrete suggestions to improve the quality of life. It is all about small steps; you don't want to push the affected person