



PAVEE POINT  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

# Pavees worried about suicide



As Travellers, we know that poor mental health and suicide are very common in our community. Often Travellers who might be worried about family members may not know how to react or what to do to support the person.

This resource has been developed by Pavee Point to support Traveller families in recognising the signs and triggers related to suicide and provides some helpful tips in how to respond.

## What is mental distress?

Mental distress is when people feel fed up and down in themselves. This is because of constant or sudden stresses in everyday life. How people feel and think is impacted by the social determinants. For Travellers, this means not being given equal opportunities in regards to health, education, employment and accommodation. This is made worse by experiences of discrimination and for most Travellers, the worry of being discriminated against on a daily basis.



### Some other factors that impact on mental distress include:

- Marriage and relationship break down
- Past experiences of abuse
- Domestic violence
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Not sleeping well or taking care of yourself
- Financial worries
- Worrying about not being accepted because of your sexuality or gender identity



## Signs of distress

### These are some of the signs of someone in distress:

- Change in mood and behaviour - some people can become more angry or not seem to care
- Feeling down
- Not mixing or don't want to mix with family or friends
- A person who stops taking care of themselves

### For some people, mental distress can cause suicidal thoughts. These are some of the possible triggers for suicidal thoughts:

- A death of a family member either through suicide or other causes of death
- A traumatic experience
- Bullying
- Family breakdown/marriage breakdown
- Feeling isolated - living away from the family
- Feelings of being judged or blamed
- Feelings of being a failure or a disappointment to the family



## Barriers to opening up

For Travellers it is very hard to talk about how we're feeling when it comes to suicide. Often we're scared of being judged for bringing shame on the family and not being taken seriously or adding more stress to the family. It can also be more difficult for Travellers to open up as we are a close knit community and Travellers would know of each other's family. Most Travellers are also worried about not being treated fairly when looking for support from services.



➡ **These are all barriers for Travellers when opening up and looking for help.**

## How can you support a Traveller that you're worried about?

It can be very hard to talk to a family member or friend that you are really worried about in relation to suicide but the best thing you can do for them is to be honest and direct. Let the person know that you are worried about them because of the things they may have said or done. Ask them directly if they are thinking of suicide.

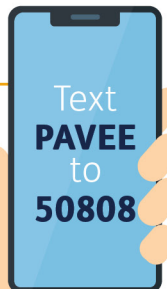
Remember, how you react has an impact on a person opening up to you.

If someone opens up to you about feeling suicidal, it is common to feel shocked, scared and not knowing how to react. Here are some tips:

- Take the person seriously; Travellers that are opening up are not looking for attention or petting, they're asking for your help because they need it
- Try to listen and understand how they're feeling and what's going on
- Try to be calm and make them feel comfortable when opening up
- Let them know that there is help out there and offer (where you can) to go with them to the GP, A&E, or contact a crisis helpline such as Pieta or PAVEE 50808

➡ **Supporting a loved one who is experiencing suicidal thoughts can take a toll on you, it is important to know what your limits.**

**Make sure to mind yourself so you can continue to help your loved one.**



## Other ways to support someone you're worried about:

- Encourage them to link in with services and keep attending
- Suggest visiting holy places with their families, e.g. Knock, Medjugorje, Lourdes, Holy Wells, etc. or if there is Mass on site you suggest they attend
- Encourage a daily routine - getting a good night's sleep and avoid going on social media constantly
- Offer to do exercise - joining the football team, going for walks, etc.
- Let the person come up with what they feel works best for them. You don't have to have all the solutions.
- Continue your support. Your support is very important to make sure your loved one continues to look for the help they need.

## Where to get help

If you think someone needs help, encourage and support them to call their GP or contact their mental health service if they are using one.

OR

If they are at risk of harming themselves:

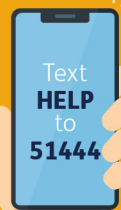
- **Immediately call 999 or 112 for an ambulance**
- **Go to the nearest A&E**

## OTHER SUPPORTS

- Local Traveller organisation or Primary Health Care Project
- Traveller Counselling Service:  
*Telephone: 086 308 1476 or email: travcounselling@ hotmail.com*
- Exchange House: *Telephone: 01 872 1094*

## FREE 24/7 CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT

- Text PAVEE to 50808
- Samaritans:  
*Telephone: 116 123 or email: jo@samaritans.ie*
- Pieta:  
*Telephone: 1800 247 247 or Text: HELP to 51444*



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