

information for family and friends

The Girl on the Bridge

The Girl on the Bridge is a documentary film following suicide-survivor and advocate, Jazz Thornton, as she makes a web series about her friend, Jessica, who took her own life.

The documentary recounts Jessica's life through a series of interviews with her family and friends. And follows Jazz' personal struggles as she tries to bring the web series to fruition with the aim of reducing the stigma associated with suicide.

headspace developed the following information that may be helpful for viewers of the documentary and the wider community. The information aims to assist parents engage in healthy conversations about the documentary, provides tips on how to support young people, outlines where to seek help, and provides information about suicide and suicidal thoughts.

Important things to remember

If you or your young person are likely to be affected by the suicide content of the documentary, it's important to consider whether you watch it.

- Some people may be distressed by the documentary, while others are not. This will depend on individual life experiences and current circumstances. It's important to be respectful of other people's experiences.
- You may not be aware if your young person or their peers have had experiences similar to those discussed in the documentary. Having open conversations can help to know when further support is necessary. It can help to keep this in mind in the days and weeks during and after your young person is exposed to the documentary (through peers or by watching).

Tips for watching the film safely

- Do some research and get informed about the documentary.
- Consider if it is age appropriate.
- Try to have discussions about the documentary when everyone is feeling calm.
- Talk about any reasons for concern.
- Understand their desire to watch the documentary. Understanding their point of view doesn't mean agreeing with them but it may help to keep the conversation going.

Before watching the film

If you and your young person decide to watch the documentary, it might be useful to consider some of the following

- Take breaks and do soothing things if you need to mid-watch (e.g. go for a walk).
- Ensure they watch with a support person or watch it together.

- Model good self care behaviours.
- Remember to keep checking in with your young person.
- Know where to go for professional support if this becomes necessary and support them to get professional care. There is a list of professional support options below.

Questions to help the conversation

- Have you experienced anything like the people in the film?
- Did parts of the documentary make you think about how people who are struggling sometimes don't show the full picture of what they are dealing with to others?
- Who would you go to if you were having a tough time?
- How do you know when to offer compassion/support/empathy and when to set clear boundaries?
- Do you know anyone that might be in trouble or need help?

Understanding Suicide

Suicide is a complex issue with many contributing factors, including individual personality characteristics, coping styles, life history of experiences, current circumstances, support networks, and mental health difficulties.

Unfortunately, thinking about suicide is more common than it should be. Despite this, it is still a serious sign that things are not OK.

Suicidal thoughts are thoughts, plans, images, imaginings or preoccupations a young person may have about ending their own life. Suicidal thoughts can occur when life circumstances have been difficult and stressful, such as after a major loss or traumatic event.

Some young people may experience suicidal thoughts when life seems unbearable and are unable to think of another way out of their painful or difficult situation.

Young people can and DO get through these times in their lives. Most young people experiencing suicidal thoughts find a way to work through them. With effective treatment, social support and time, many who have tried to end, or considered ending their lives can go on to live full, meaningful and productive lives.

It can be hard for young people to share with someone if they are experiencing suicidal thoughts. Indications that you should be more proactive in providing support are if your young person is showing signs of: increased isolation, hopelessness, withdrawal, avoidance, or exhibiting an increase in unpredictable behaviour (e.g. drug and alcohol use). Other circumstances include:

- recent discharge from psychiatric care
- previous suicide attempt, or self harm
- recent presentation to hospital emergency department for self harm or suicide
- knowing someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts, or has attempted to suicide.

A close and trusting relationship with an adult increases the chance a young person seeks support during tough times. Strategies that improve the relationship between the young person and key adults reduce the risk of suicide.

If you are concerned your young person may be experiencing suicidal thoughts, it is important to start a conversation. Some considerations when approaching the conversation:

- finding the right time. This might be when you are both calm and safe
- it is OK to ask directly if they have been experiencing suicidal thoughts. Research shows that doing this in a safe and respectful way does not increase the likelihood that they will exhibit suicidal behaviour
- you might choose to be specific about what you have seen that gives you concern

- try to hear them out and understand their experience. It is important to remain calm and composed if your young person tells you they are experiencing suicidal thoughts. This helps them to feel in control
- try to understand whether you both feel like you are able to keep safe until seeking professional support. Keeping safe might include making sure they're not alone, developing a list of things that are particularly hard and staying away from them, or developing a list of things that are helpful and trying to do them. If this feels possible together, continue to check in with your young person until professional support is accessed as soon as possible. If you do not feel that you're able to keep safe, seek immediate support.
- as hard as it can be, try to remain calm and available. This keeps the conversation going, and helps you understand what support you can provide.

It is OK to be upset if your young person discloses suicidal thoughts. It can be hard to understand, but it can also be an opportunity to connect with them.



Important

If you, or someone you care about, are in crisis call triple zero (000). You can also go to your local hospital emergency department. Remember to stay with the person until they are able to access professional support.

If you're feeling overwhelmed and need to speak with someone now, contact:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au
- Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 or suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

Where else can I go for help?

For immediate help, contact: Triple Zero (000) if it is an emergency.

Additional youth support services

- headspace: visit headspace.org.au to find your nearest centre or call eheadspace on 1800 650 890
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au
- ReachOut: reachout.com
- SANE Australia: 1800 187 263 or sane.org