



# **Losing the Will to Live**

## **Working with Suicidal Clients**



**Deep Release Online**  
*Professional Training for Counsellors*

- Over 700,000 people take their own life each year – that's one person every 40 seconds ([World Health Organization](#))
- 115 people die by suicide in the UK every week – with 75% of those deaths being male ([ONS](#))
- 1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts ([NHS Digital](#))
- 1 in 14 people self-harm (NHS Digital)
- 1 in 15 people attempt suicide (NHS Digital)
- Males aged 45-49 have the highest suicide rate ([Samaritans](#))
- 10% of young people self-harm ([Mental Health Foundation](#))



# CELEBRITY SUICIDES



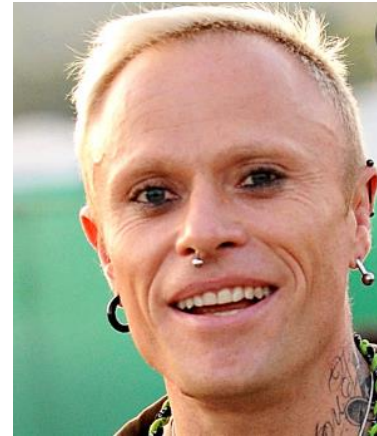
Caroline Flack, February 2020  
Presenter, Love Island  
Found hanging in her own home;  
behaviour of the tabloid press  
when she was to be prosecuted.



Mike Thalassitis, March 2019;  
Celebrity, Love Island  
Found hanging in a London  
park after cocaine and alcohol



Chris Cornell, May 2017  
Singer and musician  
Found hanging in hotel room;  
clean from substance abuse for  
10 years



Keith Flint, March 2019  
Singer with The Prodigy  
Found hanging at home;  
Cocaine, alcohol and codeine  
*Did he mean to do it?*



Chester Bennington, July  
2017. Singer and songwriter;  
found hanging at home;  
history of substance abuse  
and depression



Robin Williams, August 2014  
Found hanging at home  
Alcohol addiction and  
depression – suffering from  
form of dementia.



Media reporting of suicide, especially celebrity suicides, is associated with increases in suicide in the general population, particularly by the same method as used by the celebrity, finds an analysis of the latest evidence published by **The BMJ**. (March 2020)

Until 1961 suicide was a criminal act in the UK



Suicide Act 1961

1961 CHAPTER 60

## SUICIDE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

- Suicide is still considered a crime in 20 countries, punishable by fines of thousands of pounds and up to three years in prison
  - In many nations children can be prosecuted for attempted suicide
  - In Nigeria, children as young as seven can be arrested, tried and prosecuted (United for Global Mental Health, a group calling for decriminalisation).
  - A further 20 countries make suicide punishable under Sharia Law.
  - In the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Guyana and Kenya – the will of someone judged to have killed themselves may be discounted.
- In recent years suicide legislation has been successfully repealed or superseded by new legislation in some countries.

# THE LAW ON ASSISTED DYING



## House of Lords Library

[UK Parliament](#) > [House of Lords Library](#) > [In Focus](#) > [Assisted Dying Bill \[HL\]](#)

In Focus

## Assisted Dying Bill [HL]

Published Friday, 08 October, 2021

- Assisted dying is illegal in England and Wales under Section 2 of the Suicide Act 1961.
- Under this act, a person judged to have assisted the suicide or attempted suicide of another person is liable to imprisonment for up to 14 years.
- The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 provided an exemption, which was clarified in a February 2010 policy from the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Crown Prosecution Service

These guidelines advised against prosecution if...

***“the victim had reached a voluntary, clear, settled and informed decision to commit suicide” and any person assisting was “wholly motivated by compassion”.***

<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/assisted-dying-bill-hl/>



# SUICIDE AND THE CHURCH

Until 1882 it was illegal to bury a victim of suicide in the church graveyard and Anglican Canon Law stipulated that the approved burial service should not be used in the case of a person who  
*“...being of sound mind laid violent hands upon himself.”*



UK NEWS

## Church ends ban on full Christian funerals for suicides

Tue 11 Jul 2017 by Eno Adeoqun



## THE LANGUAGE WE USE

~~Committed Suicide~~

~~Completed Suicide~~

~~Successful attempt~~

~~Unsuccessful attempt~~

~~Suicidal ideation~~

Death by Suicide ✓

Died of Suicide ✓

Took their own life ✓

Suicide death ✓

Suicide attempt ✓

Person living with suicidal thoughts ✓

Suicidal behaviour ✓



A person stands at the end of a long, narrow wooden pier that stretches from the bottom center towards the horizon. The sky is dark and dramatic, with heavy, dark grey clouds on the left and a lighter, blue-grey area on the right where a large flock of birds is flying away from the person. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

*“Suicide remains a silent killer, shrouded in shame, denial and superstition, as if simply whispering its name will increase its power...”*



# Jackie's Story

*Fighting the urge to die*



**Please turn your  
video off for the  
film**

**THANK YOU!**



# Buddy Group Discussions

- Share your personal experience if it feels safe
- How do you feel about working with clients who are suicidal
- How did you respond to Jackie's testimony?

**15 minutes – divide the time between you all**







5

MINUTES





**?**  
**DO YOU**  
**HAVE**  
**ANY**  
**QUESTIONS OR**  
**COMMENTS?**

# “THE VOICE”

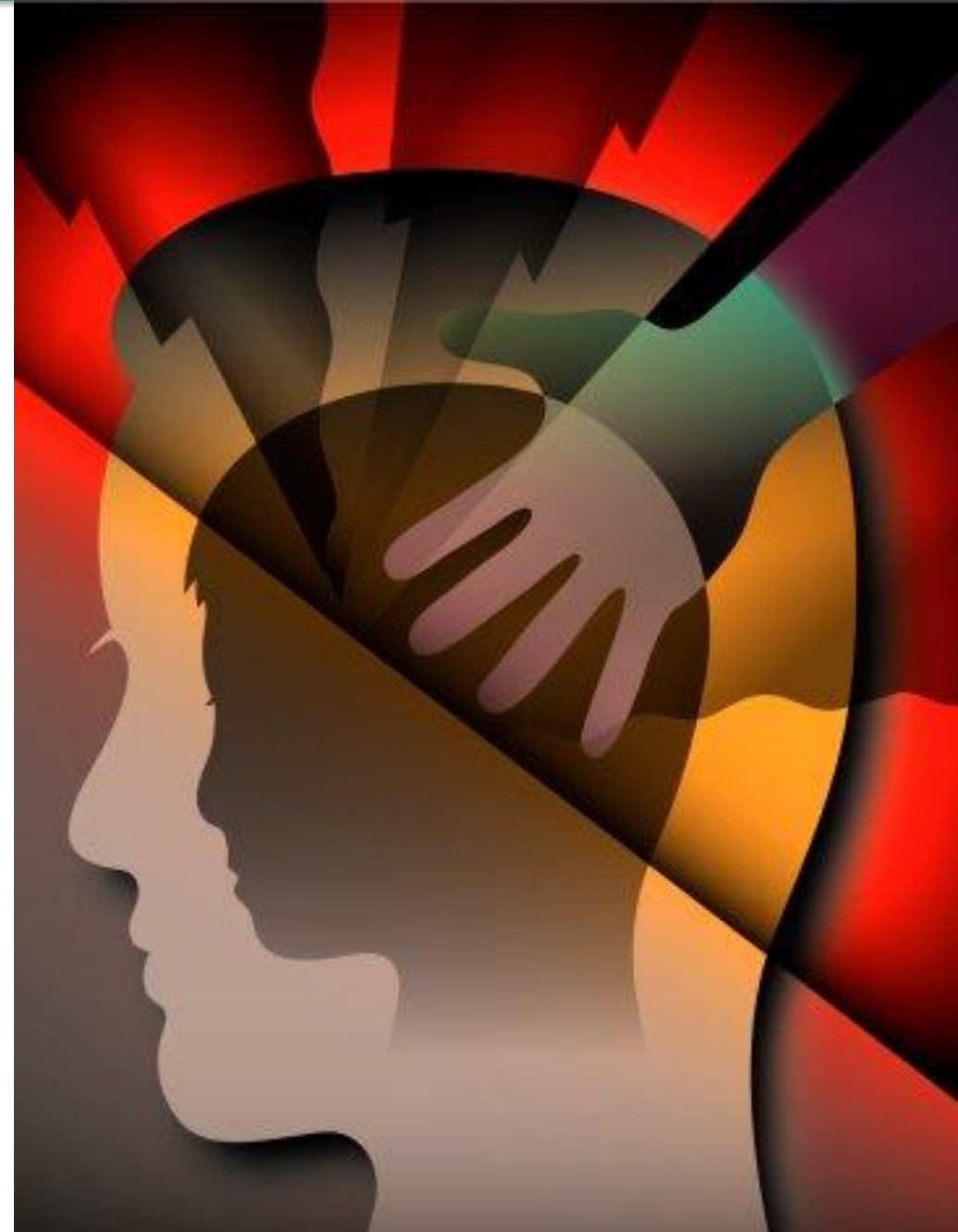
- **Commands people to isolate themselves from others**
- **Instructs them to be secretive and hide their intentions from others**
- **Tells them to cut off emotional feelings for themselves and others**
- **Gets resentful of experiences that intrude on their plan of isolation**
- **Starts getting angry, telling the person to get on with the deed**
- **Drives them to the point of action**



# THE SUICIDAL TRANCE

*“At this point in the (suicidal) trance, the inner pull towards suicide dramatically intensified. Often it comes in the form of a voice... This voice grows in volume with the stress of the suicidal ordeal. It demands increasingly to be heard above everything else, and it begins to occupy a greater part of the person’s psyche until it smothers more reasonable voices altogether. Often people experience this voice as relentlessly driving them towards self-destruction.”*

Richard Heckler (1994), “Waking up Alive”





# LEVELS OF INCREASING SUICIDAL INTENTION

Thoughts that lead to low self-esteem /  
self-defeating thoughts



*“You’re incompetent / stupid / unattractive...”*

*“You’re too old / too young to apply for this job...”*

*“Why go out with her/him? They’ll reject you...”*

# LEVELS OF INCREASING SUICIDAL INTENTION

Thoughts influencing isolation; rationalisations for time alone; using time to become more negative towards oneself

"Just be by yourself.  
You're miserable  
company anyway – who  
would want to be with  
you?"

"You idiot! You bitch!  
You creep! You don't  
deserve anything!  
You're worthless"

Self-contempt; vicious  
self-abusive thoughts  
and accusations;  
intense anger



# LEVELS OF INCREASING SUICIDAL INTENTION

## Thoughts that support the cycle of addiction

Thoughts urging the use of substances or food, followed by self criticism.

Weakens inhibitions against self-destructive actions, while at the same time increasing guilt and self-recrimination following acting out.





## Thoughts that lead to suicide (self-annihilating thoughts)

It's all hopeless... keep away from everyone... you just make your friends and family feel bad... they'll be better off without you....

Your work doesn't matter any more... why bother even trying...





Urges to inflict self-harm... take action; intense rage against self

Thoughts planning details of suicide... calm, rational obsessive, indicating complete loss of feeling for the self

*Drive across the central carriageway... just cut your wrists...*

*You have to get hold of some pills... then go to a hotel...*





Injunctions to carry out the  
suicide plans... thoughts baiting  
the person to commit suicide;  
extreme thought constriction

*You've thought about this long  
enough!  
Just get it over with.  
It's the only way out.*





# What It Is Like To Feel Suicidal

*“This feeling - such a feeling! - loomed up over me like some pre-historic sea-monster, ready to snap me up and devour me, ready to pilfer my bones and pick apart my brain. This feeling was too much. It was all too much. Feelings weren’t supposed to be overwhelming. I didn’t know how to ‘do’ feelings. I didn’t know you could feel like this. I certainly didn’t know you could survive feeling like this.”*

Carolyn Spring, 2015.



# MORAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Counsellor faced with ethical dilemma: respect client's autonomy or seek to preserve life.
  - ***Life is the most valuable thing we possess – the sanctity of life is self-evident.***
  - Anyone who questions this is in crisis, ill or in someway 'abnormal'.
  - Mental health professionals tend to support this – suicidal feelings 'short-lived' and people need to be protected when they are evident.
- 
- ***Suicide is the ultimate expression of someone's choice of how to live or die and should be respected.***
  - Any coercive attempt to prevent suicide contradicts the concept of individuals as moral agents who are ultimately responsible for their own actions.



## MORAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Client who has eg terminal cancer and who chooses to die when and how they wish. Clearly acting under own volition, not influenced by others.
- It is illegal to assist them in any way. (Hospitalisation would not be enforced.)

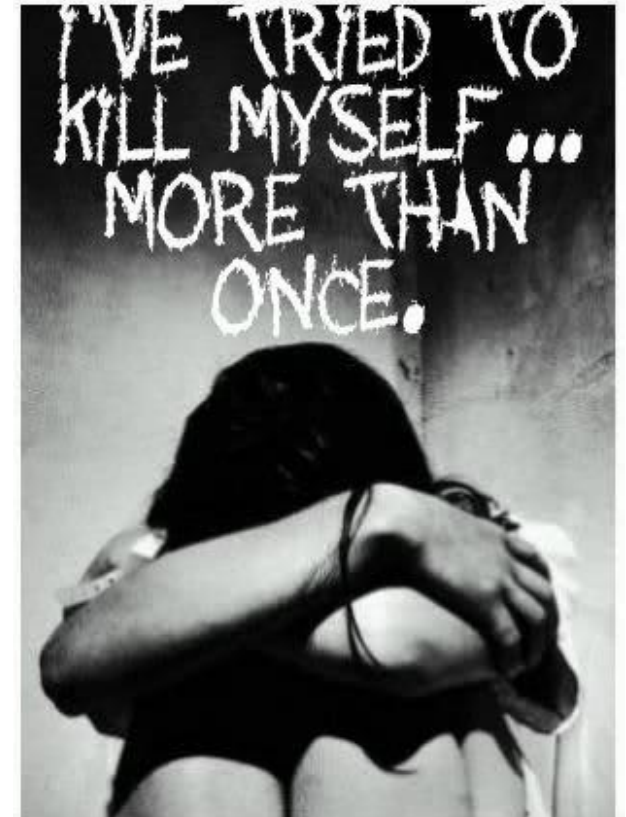
***“A person who aids, abets, counsels or procures the suicide of another or an attempt by another to commit suicide, shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years.”***  
***(Suicide Act 1961)***

- It is well established in English law that adults have the right to refuse treatment even if to do so would result in their own death.





- **Client who is depressed and overwhelmed by painful experiences and wants out.**
- In most US states counsellors are required to breach confidentiality to report a client's suicidal intent. There is no equivalent requirement in Britain.
  - A Counsellor could be liable for substantial damages for loss of earnings if the client's career were to be adversely affected by
  - inappropriate disclosure.



## MORAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

*“The fact that the therapist is having difficulty in containing his or her own anxiety is not a sufficient reason to breach a client’s confidentiality...”*

*“If an adult client, with mental capacity, is contemplating suicide and actively forbids a therapist to seek additional help, the therapist is under a general legal obligation to respect the client’s confidence.”*



***“All suicidal people are ambivalent; part of them wants to die, but part of them wants to live as well... And if you can connect with and help strengthen that part of them that wants to live, then you’re on the right track...”***

***“Making yourself a real person to them is important because that strengthens the connection. What you’re trying to build is trust: you want them to see you as a safe haven, as well as the attachment for them that they may never have had...”***

Lisa Firestone PhD





## ARGUMENTS AGAINST CONTRACTING

- Therapist can be lulled into a state of security that fails to appraise the ongoing situation
- Has the potential to meet the therapist's needs, rather than the client's and can avoid a more thorough assessment process
- It can be experienced as entrapping
- It can feel like a lie as clients often say they wouldn't be bound by it
- Contracts can be too open-ended
- The therapist could become their external locus of control: their reason to live

Firestone, Reeve, Fisher

## ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF CONTRACTING

- Helps establish a therapeutic alliance
- Indicates the client's motivation to improve and their acceptance of responsibility for the therapy programme
- Facilitates honest and open communication about suicidality
- Reduces the client's anxiety, agitation, hopelessness and gives them a feeling of control

Firestone 1997;  
Journal of Clinical Psychiatry

# WHY MIGHT SOMEONE WANT TO TAKE THEIR OWN LIFE?

The risk of suicide is higher when:

- a young person is depressed, or when they have a serious mental illness
- is using drugs or alcohol when they are upset
- has tried to kill themselves a number of times or has planned for a while how to die without being saved
- has a friend or relative who tried to kill themselves



# SUICIDE STATISTICS

## Methods Used

Overdose.....	24%
Hanging.....	20%
Carbon Monoxide...	20%
Cut wrists.....	8%
Drowning.....	6%
Jumping (height).....	5%
Jumping (moving)....	4%
Firearms.....	3%
Self-burning.....	2%
Other.....	16%



## Reasons Given

Relationship.....	34%
Mental Health.....	15.5%
Housing/Accom.....	12.4%
Addiction/Alcohol.....	10.3%
Financial.....	8.2%
Employment.....	5.2%
Bereavement.....	4.1%
Sexuality problems.....	3.1%
Legal problems.....	3.1%
Education problems.....	2.1%
Health .....	2.1%

**NB: Apparent improvement in health may mask the reality – don't assume that just because they appear better that they are.**



## SOME MYTHS ABOUT SUICIDE

- ❑ If they talk about killing themselves, they won't do it...  
*WRONG: Talking about committing suicide will make people less likely to kill themselves but it is no guarantee that they won't go through with it.*
- ❑ If you mention suicide you're putting ideas in someone's head  
*WRONG: Mentioning it will allow them to talk about it and so ease the possibility. But you won't do any harm by asking.*
- ❑ People who talk about killing themselves are just attention-seeking  
*WRONG: They typically want to stop pain – their own or other people's, and they can't think of another way out. Offer them help and the desire to die will fade.*



# Heather's Story

*A sister's suicide*

**Please turn your  
video off for the  
film**

**THANK YOU!**





# Buddy Group Discussions

- How do you feel, thinking about considerations for counsellors?
- Share your experiences as appropriate – get support
- How did you respond to Heather's testimony?

**15 minutes – divide the time between you all**







**10  
MINUTES**





**?**  
**DO YOU**  
**HAVE**  
**ANY**  
**QUESTIONS OR**  
**COMMENTS?**



# **SUICIDE GENERATES ANGER**

## **WE WANT TO BLAME SOMEBODY**

**The therapist is angry with the family**

**The family is angry with the therapist**

**Everyone is angry with the person who died**

## SUICIDE IS NOT A PRIVATE ACT

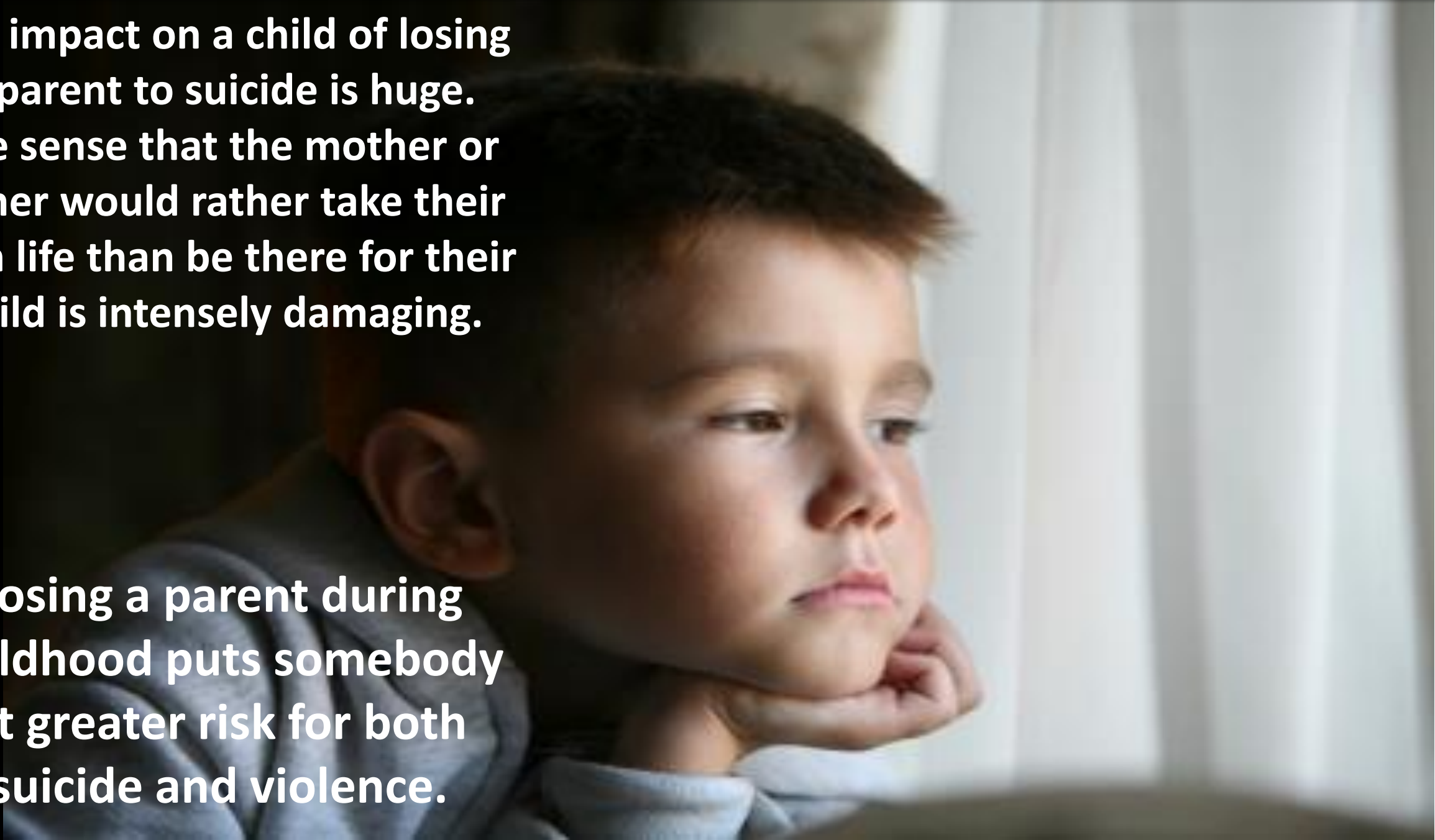
*“That’s the thing about suicide: there’s no suicide without other people being hurt. It’s not a private act between a person and themselves. Nobody’s an island unto themselves enough that their suicide doesn’t affect other people.”*

*Certainly, when you’re the therapist, you get hurt if it happens, but also the family members, the loved ones. No matter how complex their relationships to the individual might have been, they get hurt...”*



**The impact on a child of losing a parent to suicide is huge. The sense that the mother or father would rather take their own life than be there for their child is intensely damaging.**

**Losing a parent during childhood puts somebody at greater risk for both suicide and violence.**







## **VERBAL SIGNS:**

*"I can't go on",  
"Nothing matters any more",  
"I'm thinking of ending it all..."*



**BECOMING DEPRESSED OR WITHDRAWN**



**BEHAVING RECKLESSLY**



**GETTING AFFAIRS IN ORDER/  
GIVING AWAY VALUED POSSESSIONS**



**SHOWING A MARKED CHANGE  
IN BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDES  
OR APPEARANCE**





**ABUSING DRUGS OR  
ALCOHOL**



**SUFFERING A MAJOR LOSS  
OR LIFE CHANGE**

## **INCREASED RISK IF...**

- ✓ **Male**
- ✓ **Mental Illness**
- ✓ **Family history of suicide or violence**
- ✓ **Sexual or physical abuse**
- ✓ **Death of a close friend or family member**
- ✓ **Divorce or separation, ending a relationship**
- ✓ **Failing academic performance, impending exams/results**
- ✓ **Job loss / problems at work**
- ✓ **Impending legal action**
- ✓ **Recent imprisonment or upcoming release**



# WHEN A CLIENT IS SUICIDAL



The client  
wants to  
die

The stakes  
are higher

The  
boundaries  
are more  
flexible

- **Makes the therapist want to get rid of her**
- **Makes family and friends want to get rid of her**
- **We need to keep connection**
- **We need to inspire hope**
- **Contact between sessions, checking up on them**
- **Shepherding them through, teaching them ways of coping**



***“Most of the research shows that if you really dig deep and tune into the client’s perspective, you find it’s their sense of you - that you really do care about them, that you’re willing to go outside the normal boundaries if necessary – that is what’s ultimately important to them...”***



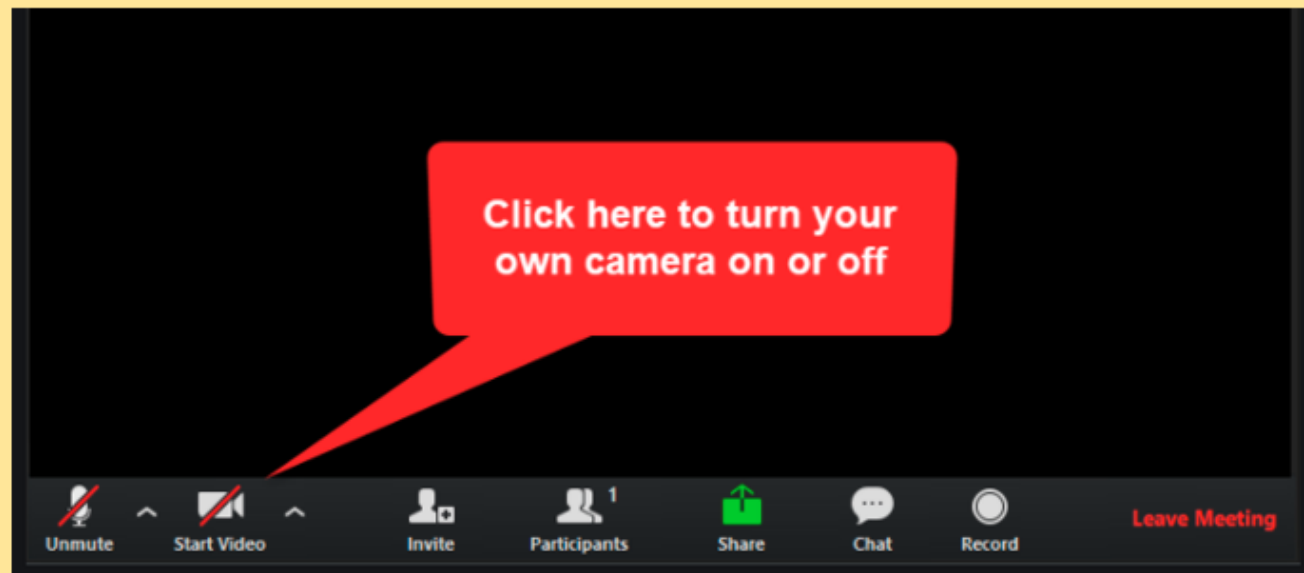


# Yasmin's Story

## *A partner's suicide*

**Please turn your  
video off for the  
film**

**THANK YOU!**





## MAKE IT FIT THE CLIENT!

- Breathing, sighing, releasing tension or talking in a calm voice
- Taking walks, jogging, being physically active
- Watching calming TV shows, eg nature programmes
- Engaging in any safe activity that calms the body (taking a bath, baking, ironing, knitting, drawing, crosswords, playing with a pet...)
- Working with the hands (gardening, cooking, needlework, painting)
- Prayer and meditation, listening to guided visualisation tapes
- Inspiration – finding one thing that makes you smile
- Using a mantra, eg “This too shall pass,” “One day at a time”...

Janina Fisher 2001, used with permission

# REDUCING IMPULSIVITY

<b>Delay</b>	Help the person to think of delaying their suicide for a certain amount of time... 48 hours / 1 week
<b>Ask</b>	Ask the opinion of 2 others first (be careful who!)
<b>Distract</b>	Use distraction techniques
<b>Remove</b>	Encourage the removal of any lethal objects



# CREATING SAFETY NETS

## Coping with feelings

- Call a friend
- Have list of coping skills
- Watch 'The Lion King'

## Coping with Impulses

- Don't be alone
- Find coping list
- Call supporter
- Breathe
- Live a minute at a time
- Call hotline





**CREATING  
SAFETY NETS**  
**when there is  
an action plan**

Call

Call my therapist

Be safe

Make sure I am in a safe place

Get help

Go to A & E

Contract

Read my contract

Read

Use my Survival Kit

When you are feeling actively suicidal, the brain goes offline and you can't think of any strategies you've learnt.

You'll need a post-it, a card or a poster - you just have to need to go to it, rather than remember it.

Keep them in the house, in the car, in your handbag, by your bed or anywhere it might be needed.

**Breathe**

**Paint**

**Go for  
a walk**

**Do  
some  
gardening**

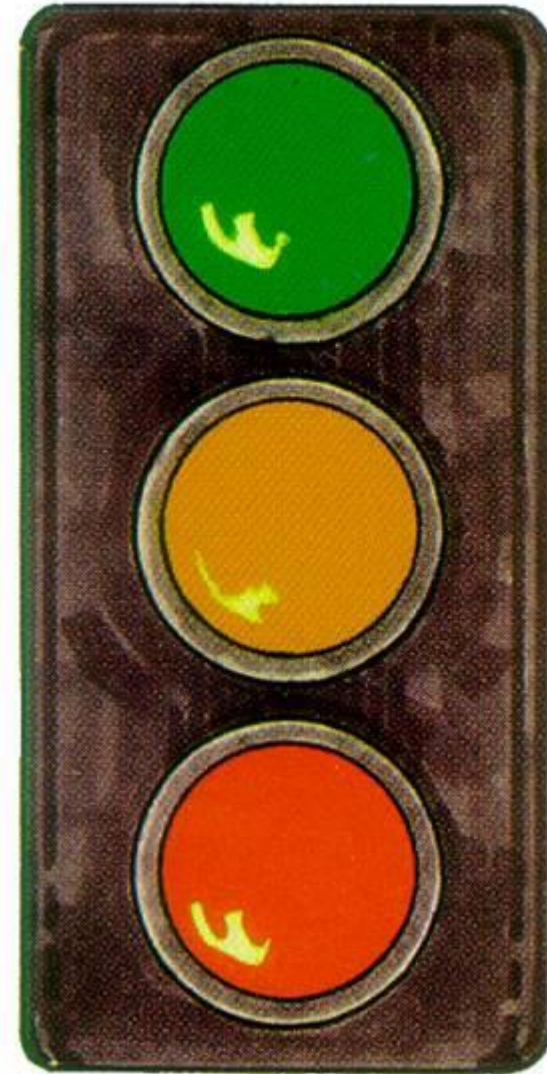
**Draw  
your  
feelings**

**This  
will  
pass**

**Just  
today**

**Call Jo**

- **SUICIDAL IDEATION**
- **SUICIDAL INTENTION**
- **SUICIDAL ACTION**





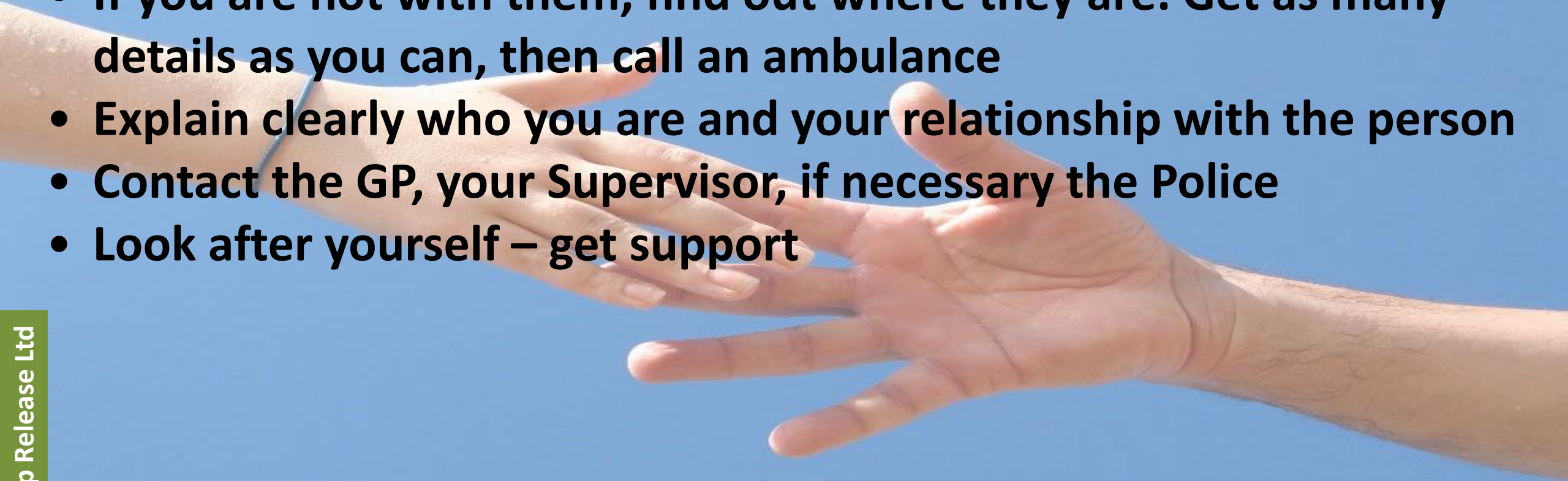
# ACTIONS TO TAKE IF SOMEONE IS SUICIDAL

- **Contact your Supervisor**
- **Contact the GP?**
- **Take them seriously**
- **Treat them with respect**
- **Be there for them**
- **Listen to them**
- **Offer them hope**
- **Encourage them to choose life**
- **Stay in contact**
- **Seek professional back-up & support**
- **Look for other supports they can draw on, eg Samaritans**



If they have taken an overdose...

- If you are with them call an ambulance
- If you are not with them, find out where they are. Get as many details as you can, then call an ambulance
- Explain clearly who you are and your relationship with the person
- Contact the GP, your Supervisor, if necessary the Police
- Look after yourself – get support





# Buddy Group Discussions

- Final thoughts
- Where has today left you?
- Share your details with each other if you wish to

**10 minutes – divide the time between you all**







5

MINUTES





**?**  
**DO YOU**  
**HAVE**  
**ANY**  
**QUESTIONS OR**  
**COMMENTS?**





# Resources





# PACT LTD

## Original & Creative Counselling Resources

[www.pact-resources.co.uk](http://www.pact-resources.co.uk)



Erikson's Life Stages



Wheel of Life



Working with Animal  
Figures Online Pack



Therapeutic Sandscapes™  
Online Pack





AVAILABLE NOW  
[pact-resources.co.uk](https://pact-resources.co.uk)



# Instant Online Training Videos from Deep Release

Buy 2 get 1 free on all videos – discount automatically applied at checkout



Disordered Eating and Attachment – Training Video

£30.00



Working Creatively with Dreams – Training Video

£30.00



Working Creatively with Aspects of Self – Training Video

£30.00



Mending Broken Relationships – Training Video

£30.00



Using TA Creatively in Counselling – Training Video

£30.00



Working Creatively with the Inner Child in Counselling Training Video

£30.00

3 videos for the price of 2!



Working Creatively with Blocked Anger – Training Video

£30.00



Working Creatively with Nesting Dolls in Counselling – Training Video

£30.00



Working with Gestalt in the Counselling Room – Training Video

£30.00



Attachment Behaviour in the Counselling Room – Training Video

£30.00



Narcissism and Echoism – Training Video

£30.00



Working with Loss and Grief – Training Video

£30.00





**A Creative Guide  
to working with the  
Inner Child**  
for Counsellors and Psychotherapists



Pauline Andrew



**A Creative Guide  
to working with  
Blocked Anger**  
for Counsellors and Psychotherapists



Pauline Andrew

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Child

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Working with Blocked  
Anger

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£30.00

# CONNECT WITH US!

## FACEBOOK GROUP

Search: Deep Release Ltd – Counselling & Training



- A closed group for counsellors & trainee counsellors
- Please answer the joining questions!



### Deep Release Ltd - Counselling & Training

🔒 Private group 1.5K members



+ Invite



# CONNECT WITH US!

## YOUTUBE CHANNEL

**Search: Pauline Andrew Creative Counselling**

- Lots of videos on working creatively
- Please subscribe!

Or visit:

[YouTube.com/c/PaulineAndrewCreativeCounselling](https://www.youtube.com/c/PaulineAndrewCreativeCounselling)



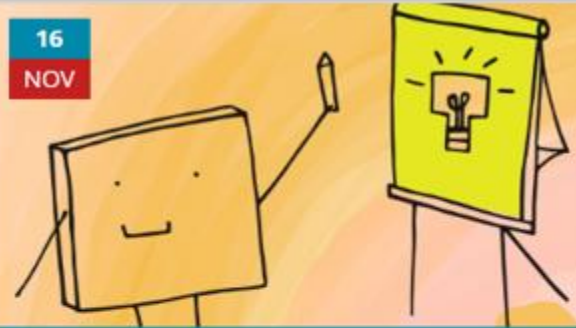
## YOUTUBE CHANNEL

**Search: Brain Body and Beyond**

- Videos on Life, the Brain and Relationships
- Please subscribe!



# COMING UP!



16  
NOV

Online Event

**Psycho-Integration for Counsellors  
with Dr Chris**  
Weds Nov 16

**Price Starts from: £10.00**

November 16, 2022  
9:30 am - 1:00 pm



22  
NOV

Online Event

**A Masterclass in Working with the  
Roles Played in Anger Cards**  
Tues Nov 22

**Price Starts from: £10.00**

November 22, 2022  
9:30 am - 11:30 am



03  
DEC

Online Event

**Making the Most of Supervision (for  
Counsellors and Supervisors)**  
Sat Dec 3

**Price Starts from: £10.00**

December 3, 2022  
9:30 am - 1:00 pm



13  
DEC

Online Event

**Free Course: Introducing the new  
Roles Played in Groups cards**  
Tues Dec 13

**Price: Free**

December 13, 2022  
9:30 am - 11:30 am



Please send us  
your feedback!



Contact us:  
[info@deeprelease.org.uk](mailto:info@deeprelease.org.uk)

[deeprelease.org.uk](http://deeprelease.org.uk)

[pact-resources.co.uk](http://pact-resources.co.uk)

*Thank you*

