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Background....

Experiences of domestic abuse are known to have long term adverse impacts on psychological wellbeing.

Depression, post-traumatic stress anxiety and behavioural consequences such as social isolation, substance misuse and self-harm are common outcomes of such abuse. These negative consequences are recognised risks for suicide and its precursor suicidality (suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts) among victims of domestic abuse as well as the population in general.



Domestic Abuse and Suicide



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Factors that contribute to incidents of suicide...

Mental health difficulties, isolation, substance misuse, self-harm, hopelessness and despair are risk factors that may increase the risks for suicide attempts or death.

Traumatic life experiences like domestic abuse are also recognised as a precursor to suicide.

Previous suicidal behaviour is one of the most robust predictors of future suicide. A completed attempt often follows an uncompleted attempt often within 1 year

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Sources of support.....

[Supporting someone who feels suicidal | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](#)

[If you're worried about someone else | Samaritans](#)

[Suicide | Mental Health Foundation](#)

[Suicide \(supportline.org.uk\)](#)

[Suicide Awareness eLearning via RBSB Website](#)

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Cry of Pain...

Suicidal acts (completed or not) are understood as a 'cry of pain' rather than a cry for help. Suicide is more likely when feelings of defeat and entrapment exist alongside beliefs that neither rescue nor escape are possible.

The 'cry of pain' model of suicidality may be particularly relevant to the domestic abuse population, as victims tend to experience the feelings described above. These feelings can be experienced irrespective of any mental health diagnosis.

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How can we help...

Asking about suicide does not encourage it nor does it lead a person to start thinking about it, in fact it may prevent it and start a potentially lifesaving conversation. Asking if they are having suicidal thoughts and ask what is happening for them.

Encouraging and helping them to access support from a GP or medical health professional

Feelings of hopelessness are a key factor in suicide so giving them hope and assuring them that with help their suicidal thought will pass with time.

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Recognising the Signs of Suicidal Intentions...

If you are supporting an individual who is the victim of domestic abuse, being aware of their risk of suicidality is important. Warning signs precede the majority of suicides. This could include an escalation in their mental health difficulties, an intensification of their feelings of hopelessness and despair or an increase in substance misuse or self-harm.

Most people contemplating suicide do not know who to speak to and worry about being judged if they speak out. Responding to warning signs by providing opportunities to speak openly can help individuals to feel less isolated and on their own.

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Why is it important to be aware of suicide....

Suicidality is more prevalent among domestically abused women than their non-abused counterparts.

30 women a day attempt suicide and 3 a week are successful in the attempt. Hundreds more commit suicide after attending hospital for treatment for domestic violence related injuries.

Suicide is a preventable cause of death. Heightened suicide risk is often short term and situation specific, whilst suicidal thoughts may return they are not permanent and an individual with previous suicidal thoughts and attempts may go on to live a long life