



MINDOUT

We need to talk about...
...suicide

www.mindout.org.uk

➤ Many of us will have considered suicide at some point in our lives. Many of us will be living with a degree of suicidal distress, some on a daily basis. Many of us will have seriously considered acting on those feelings. Many of us will have tried to kill ourselves. Many of us will know someone who has tried or who has died.

Talking about suicide is vital. It's a mistake to think it's better not to mention it. Have a conversation about suicide today, now, tomorrow, every day. We don't need to wait until we're worried about someone, we don't only need to talk about suicide to people who we think might be depressed or anxious or upset. We need to talk about it now, we need to acknowledge our feelings about a distressing subject. We need to create communities where it's safe to talk about suicide.

For many of us who feel suicidal, there seems to be no other way out. Feelings of suicide should not be underestimated, they are real and powerful and immediate.

But it is also true that:

- Intense suicidal feelings will pass, suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem
- When we're depressed, we tend to see things through the very narrow perspective of the present moment. A week or a month later, things may look completely different
- Most people who once thought about killing themselves are now glad to be alive. They say they didn't want to end their lives – they just wanted to stop the pain.

For many years, MindOut has been running a pioneering, unique suicide prevention group. The group, called **Out of the Blue**, brings together LGBTQ people who have lived experience of suicidal distress, to create a supportive, safe place to talk about feelings, to share how we survive distress, to learn from each other, to end the silence and the isolation.

You might think that talking about suicide is wrong, that it encourages or even gives people the idea. You might think it's better to avoid the subject and not to open up. The evidence of our group work shows how positive and how useful it is to talk. Eighty per cent of group members reported significant reduction in the frequency and intensity of suicidal thoughts and 60% reported significant improvements to self-injury.

"I didn't think the group would be helpful to be honest, but I was so wrong. I've never spoken about my desire to kill myself before; I thought people would consider me selfish, a horrible human being. I found the courage to talk and in turn I found support and friendship."

As well as reduced suicidal distress, group members report improved sleep, being better able to deal with anger management, feeling less isolated and more informed and empowered.

Out of the Blue meets weekly, same time, same place, same people for nine weeks at a time. New people can join at each nine-week break.

Such is the success of peer support that we are now running a second Out of the Blue group, for trans and non-binary people. Suicidal distress in trans and non-binary communities is extremely common. One study found 84% of trans people reported acute suicidal distress. Of our trans advocacy clients we've found it to be at least 90%.

"I've struggled to stay alive all of my adult life, my suicidal thoughts are constant... I've been continually misunderstood by mental health professionals... pathologised, judged and abused because of my non-conforming gender identity. MindOut services are the only support I've ever had. I would be dead today without MindOut."

Groups are not for everyone, and not for everyone right now. It has to be right for you and has to be the right time. Many people come to MindOut wanting to talk things through one-to-one with another person, for support, needing information, wanting to find out what there is which might help their own situation, which may or may not include feeling suicidal. You can talk in confidence to an 'out' LGBTQ mental health worker.

MindOut has produced two help sheets, one for people feeling suicidal the other for people supporting someone who is suicidal. Please see www.mindout.org.uk/resources where you'll also find a suicide pocket resource, we have paper copies of both. Both have details of other crisis support services.

When talking to someone who is suicidal remember that staying calm and listening is the best response. You can:

- Ask them about why they want to die, what's happening now that feels unbearable?
- Ask about any other support they have, have they told anyone else?
- Ask if there is anything that is OK about their lives, what might be worth living for?
- Ask what would keep them safe right now, for the next hour, the next day etc and help them make a safe plan.
- For other support see the link above.

If you want to talk about yourself, you're supporting someone else and if you've been touched by suicide in any way you're more than welcome to contact us. You can phone or email and we will respond as quickly as possible. You can contact our online service (see below) which is open in the evenings and at weekends. On Wednesdays you can drop-in to Community Base and see someone there and then, and the online service is open during the day as well.

MINDOUT INFO

All MindOut services are free, confidential, non-judgemental, person centred and independent. All MindOut services are run by and for LGBTQ people with lived experience of mental health issues.

- See our website www.mindout.org.uk
- Email info@mindout.org.uk
- Call **01273 234839**
(24-hour confidential answerphone)

"Peer support is life-saving. MindOut services are lifesaving! I'm still suicidal, I'm not out of the woods, but with the support from Out Of The Blue I'm getting there. I have hope!"