

Recognizing Non-Suicidal Self-injury (NSSI) and Suicidal Ideation (SI)

Schools are not to blame for mental health issues, however school days and months are associated with increased risk of mental health crises, NSSI, suicide attempts, and suicide deaths.



SCHOOL-RELATED STRESSORS

Category	Description
Academic Pressure	Expectations; workload; difficulty maintaining/achieving grades
Social Challenges	Peer relationships; bullying; abuse at school; social conformity
Extracurricular Demands	Activities like sports, bands and clubs; time management
Transitional Stress	New schools or educational levels; adapting to new environments
Family Expectations	Pressure to succeed; family educational dynamics
Future Anxiety	Higher education; career; tests

THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

Understanding each student's typical behavior is critical. The time teachers take to know and learn about their students' strengths, demeanor, character, and energy levels, is essential to understanding a student's baseline behaviour. Establishing this baseline helps to notice deviations that might indicate mental health concerns.



IS THE BASELINE SHIFTING?

Changes in a student's typical behavior can be a sign of distress. Key indicators include:

- Altered attendance patterns.
- Shifts in academic performance or direction.
- Changes in peer groups.
- General withdrawal from school activities.
- A teacher's intuition or 'gut feeling' can also signal that something is off.

When the baseline shifts, it's important to engage with the student, and start considering the resources you may want to bring in to support them.

NON-SUICIDAL SELF-INJURY

NSSI can occur anywhere, including at home, during school breaks, or even in class. Here are some tips for teachers to consider:

- Approach the student calmly.
- Maintain a nonjudgmental demeanor understanding the functional purpose of NSSI is to relieve distress, express pain, feel something, or distract.
- Support the student to obtain medical treatment if warranted, depending on the severity of the wound.
- Be mindful of when and where conversations about NSSI and SI occur, meeting with the student privately when possible.



SUICIDAL IDEATION

Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone, regardless of how they appear outwardly. Obvious signs would be talking more emotionally, or expressions about hopelessness and death. Here are some signs for teachers to be aware of:

- withdrawal from activities
- isolation from peer groups
- declining performance
- a sudden increase in gifting
- changes in risk taking behaviour

C.A.R.E. – An Approach to Recognizing Distress

Consistent: Get to know your students well. Understanding their regular behaviors, moods, and attitudes helps establish a clear baseline.

Adjustments: Keep an eye out for any adjustments in their usual patterns. Noticing these shifts is key to early recognition of potential issues.

Retreat: Look for signs of students retreating from usual activities or social interactions.

Evidence: Pay attention to clear evidence of distress, such as specific verbal expressions or visible marks.

Please refer to our original [Suicide Prevention and Self Harm Video Series and Resources](#) for additional important content.