



SUPPORTING THE ENGAGEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SUICIDE

HOW TO:

develop and maintain relationships with people with lived experience of suicide

In order to build relationships with people with a lived experience of suicide, we firstly need to build trust.

- From the first point of contact ensure all communications are respectful and considered, in word and tone.
- Involve the person in decisions about how, when and where they feel most comfortable engaging.
- In larger meetings/conversations include an Acknowledgment of Country to show respect for Aboriginal persons and culture, and a Recognition of Lived Experience of suicide.
- Use open body language that demonstrates equality - rather than stand over someone who is seated.
- Speak in a respectful way, addressing the person by their correct title or use of preferred names.
- Use inclusive language and respect people by using their preferred pronouns. Be sure to provide your own pronouns when introducing yourself also.
- Listen with genuine interest and respect, keep focused on the person as they speak rather than looking at the clock or at your phone.
- Follow through and follow up - always.
- Show appreciation and acknowledgement for their valuable contribution. It's a brave thing to speak out about traumatic events. Every single perspective is valuable and valid. Where feedback is to be provided ensure it is constructive. Offer kind words and support.
- Discuss ongoing opportunities for engagement so the person feels connected into your network. Even if it is a long time away, the discussion around future opportunities encourages them to continue to share their experiences for the value of others.
- Establish relationships slowly, people with a lived experience of suicide may have had their trust broken many times and feel wounded. Go slowly, gently and respectfully to develop their trust and be cognisant not to break it.