



Information Sheet (4th August v.2)

“Understanding Families and Suicidal Risk.”

Principal Investigator: Dr John Fitzgerald, Director/Consultant Clinical Psychologist
The Psychology Centre, Hamilton

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring what helps families to cope when suicide becomes an issue for a young family member. You do not have to have had this experience yourself to participate. We are also interested in talking with families who have no concerns for their young persons, or have mental health concerns but no suicidal behaviour.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and confidential. Your participation (or not) will have no impact on the health services you receive now and in the future. If you decide to participate, you (as an individual or a family), can withdraw at anytime without any need to provide an explanation.

Background

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death for New Zealand youth and young adults. The New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy 2006-2016 aims to reduce the rate of suicide and suicide attempts. The strategy also aims to reduce any associated negative impact on a young person's family/whanau. It would be useful to know what could protect youth from suicide, and one important factor is the family/whanau that are caring for them.

Unfortunately little is known about the experience of families at the point at which they are faced with suicidal behaviour of a young family member. Only a few studies to date have looked at what makes families resilient, or what helps them to cope well. This is the area of research that you and your family are being invited to take part in. The aim of this project is to identify processes within families that could lead to better outcomes for all involved. We would like to look at similarities and differences in across families who have experienced any such concerns

What is involved for families?

Remember: Yours and your family's participation in this study is completely voluntary. That is, you do not have to take part in the research. If you or your family chose not to be involved it will in no way affect your relationship with your health service provider.

There is no set definition of a “family”. Whoever you identify as your family is welcome to be included in the study. There will be no cost to you as a result of participation in this research. The Psychology Centre will cover petrol costs for travel. The study materials will be in English, so it is important that you can understand, read, and speak English. There are no translator services available. There are three main parts to the study.

Part one – Describing Your Family. A meeting will be arranged for the research team to meet with your family. All family members will be involved in this part. This will be at a time and place that is acceptable to

you. If you agree to take part after meeting with the research team, we will ask each family member to sign a consent form. There will be time for a break between tasks with refreshments provided by the research team. To ensure information is recorded accurately, the interviews will be audio-taped using a digital recorder and then typed out by one of the research team. The following tasks are planned for the first meeting. These are expected to take up to 2 hours in total.

Family Group Interview. The interview will start with a very brief history of your immediate family. Who is in your family and any family significant events you identify will be drawn on a time-line. To help get a fuller description of your family, the interview will then move into broad questions. For example, we would like to know what being a “family” means to you, the key signs that you are doing well as a family, your strengths as a family, and how people might know they’re a valued part of your family. We would also like to understand how your family cope with stressful times. These questions ask about how your family reacts to stress, and what makes it easier or harder to cope with stress. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The aim is to find out your family’s own ideas about what is important. You choose what information you would like to share.

Individual Family Members Questionnaire. After the interview we will ask each family member to complete two questionnaires. One is about current psychological wellbeing. The other is a commonly used measure describing everyday aspects of being in a family.

Part Two – Checking Family Descriptions. A second meeting will be arranged for the research team to again meet with your family. All families will be involved in this part. The researchers will feed back the summary of your “describing your family” information. You are welcome to add to the summary so that it accurately reflects your family. A full typed out version of the family interview will be made available at your request. This is expected to take 30 to 60 minutes.

Only those families who have lost a young family member to suicide or had a young family member make a suicide attempt will be asked to do Part Three.

Part Three –Family Descriptions and Suicidal Behaviour. In this part the interview will move on to what was happening for your family during the time that suicidal behaviour was occurring. Young people and parents/caregivers have the option to be interviewed separately at this point to allow each person to share private information. Young children in the family will not be included in this interview due to the potentially sensitive nature of the information shared.

The focus of this interview is on what helps people to cope at this very difficult time. It is not about blaming families for what happened. The interviewer will ask for a brief description of what was happening for the young person and the family at the time that the suicidal behaviour occurred. They will then ask you to think about the features of your family that you have described, and consider the relevance of these during that time. This is expected to take 30 to 60 minutes.

What are the benefits/risks of taking part in the research?

Benefits - It is unlikely that you or your family will gain any additional benefit from taking part in the study. The real value of the study is the analysis of information from several families. Our research is being funded by Te Pou, New Zealand’s National Centre of Mental Health Research, Information and Workforce Development. We are required to provide them with a summary report and recommendations at the end of the research. We hope that we will be in a position to make recommendations about programme development that will help families in the future.

Risks – Families who have lost a young person to suicide, or have a young person who has made a suicide attempt will be asked questions about their family’s experience during that time. We would like to know if the features that each family describe about themselves in first part of the project were relevant to that time. Detailed information about the suicide or suicide attempt is not required.

It is reasonable to expect that when people talk about suicide they may experience distress. If you are in this situation please consider whether or not participating in this project is a reasonable risk for you to take. You may want to talk with your health service provider or another support person before deciding to take part. All of the questions asked in the interview are open-ended, which means the degree of personal

information discussed is up to you and your family. If as a result of participating, you or others in your family decide more help is needed, the research team can talk to you about what is available.

What will happen to information that we have about you and your family?

The research team who meets with you is obligated to keep all the information you share confidential. Quotes from your interview may be published just as you say them, so that the final report for the study will reflect your views. But we will ensure that you cannot be identified from any quotes. All the recorded information you provide for us will be kept anonymous, that is no information that could uniquely identify you or your family, such as names and addresses, will be linked. Every person who participates will be given a unique identification number for their questionnaire. No identifying information will be included when the interviews are typed out.

All information is kept in a computer database at The Psychology Centre. The database is accessible only to members of the research team, and is password protected. Any paper copies of forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the Centre until the study is completed and then destroyed.

No data that we hold will be individually reported, that is, any reports or presentation of our findings will use only results from everyone who participates in the study. There will be no way to identify individuals within this data.

Can families change their mind about being the study?

Yes. Any family member is free to stop the study tasks at anytime during the meeting without any explanation. You can withdraw any information that we have already collected at any time.

Has this project be reviewed by an ethics committee?

Yes. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Northern-Y Regional Health and Disability Ethics Committee (NTY/08/08/078). This process includes review and approval by the Waikato DHB Kaumatua Kaunihera Committee.

What should I do if I have concerns about the project?

If you have any questions or concerns about the project please speak to your support service provider or to one of the research team (John Fitzgerald, Philippa Thomas, Karma Galyer, or Gavin Whiu). Our contact phone numbers are **07-834-1520 or 0276 308 708**. Our mailing address is **The Psychology Centre, PO Box 4423, Hamilton 3247**. Our website is www.tpc.org.nz. You can also obtain independent advice and support from the local Health & Disability Advocacy Service on 0800 4 ADNET (0800 42 36 38).

What should I do if I want to find out more, or if I'm willing to participate?

If you are interested in the project please contact one of the research team (Dr John Fitzgerald, Philippa Thomas, Dr Karma Galyer, or Gavin Whiu) at The Psychology Centre. You can call on **07-834-1520 or 0276-308-708**. Alternatively you can send us the expression of interest form attached to the back of this information sheet and we will contact you. Please use the free post number on your envelope. No stamp is required.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

John Fitzgerald, PhD
Principal Investigator

Understanding Families and Suicide Risk

If you and your family are interested in the project please tear off this form and post it to the address below. This is a Freepost address so you do not need to use a stamp.

Please keep the rest of the information sheet for yourself.

The Psychology Centre, Freepost No. 205165, P. O. Box 4423, Hamilton 3247

We will contact you with further information.

Name of Contact Person for Family: _____

Phone Numbers:

Home: _____

Work: _____

Mobile: _____

ahead for health