



Understanding and responding to childhood suicidal ideation online course

2 HOURS

Start course

About this course

Understanding and responding to childhood suicidal ideation offers practitioners tools to support children who may be experiencing persistent distress and a sense of despair. When practitioners focus on building connection and listening rather than taking immediate action, they create a safe space for children to feel heard and express their distress in their own way. By exploring and seeking to understand children's expressions, practitioners gain valuable insights into the challenges children face, what it takes to manage these challenges, and the supports they may need.

The four practice skills introduced:

- Sitting with distress and despair
- Listening and seeking to understand children's experiences
- Facilitating children's assessment of the problem
- Connecting values and actions

Why was this course developed?

Research into suicide among children and young people reports approximately 100–200 suicide attempts for every one suicide.¹ In 2023, suicide-related concerns were raised in 11,743 (16%) of Kids Helpline counselling contacts, making it the third highest issue raised by children and young people using this service.²

By recognising distress and despair and seeking to understand children's experiences, practitioners are better placed to hold safe and supportive conversations that can lead to children feeling validated and heard. Through acknowledging children's agency and skills in responding to situations in their lives,

children can feel more able and more supported in managing their distress, which can reduce their despair and isolation. Highlighting their ability to respond to the challenges in their lives can develop and strengthen their supports and further equip them in responding to challenges in their lives.

How was this course developed?

This course was developed in collaboration with academic stakeholders, child and family services, child mental health experts, children, and parents with lived experience.

Who is this course for?

This course is designed for practitioners directly working with children and families. It acknowledges that children may endure prolonged distress in isolation, which can lead to despair and suicidal ideation. It aims to provide practitioners with necessary understandings and strategies to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and families.

What is included in the course?

This course features interviews with practitioners and parents, along with reading materials and reflective activities. It also presents fictional demonstrations focused on three key practice skills: listening and seeking to understand children's experiences, facilitating children's assessment of problems, and connecting values and actions. The course offers opportunities for reflection throughout, and while designed to be completed individually, these prompts can also serve as a foundation for discussions among colleagues or within teams.

Recommended APA course citation: Emerging Minds. (2024). *Understanding and responding to childhood suicidal ideation* [Online course]. Emerging Minds Learning. <https://learning.emergingminds.com.au/course/understanding-and-responding-to-childhood-suicidal-ideation>

¹ Suicide Prevention Australia. (2021). [Fact sheet: Youth suicide](#).

² Kids Helpline. (2023). [Kids Helpline impact report](#). yourtown.