

Suicide Warning Signs

Stigma associated with mental illnesses can prevent people from getting help. Your willingness to talk about mental or emotional issues and suicide with a friend, family member, or co-worker can be the first step in getting them help and in preventing suicide.

What to do if you see warning signs of suicide:

- **Begin a dialogue by asking questions.** Suicidal thoughts can be experienced by anyone regardless of race, color, education level, gender, age, religion or socioeconomic status. Your willingness to talk about it in a nonjudgmental, non-confrontational way can be the first step in someone seeking professional help.
- **Questions that are okay to ask** (note – talking about suicide will not make someone do it, in fact, talking openly about it is one of the best ways to help someone):
 - “Do you ever feel so badly that you think about suicide?”
 - “Do you have a plan to commit suicide or take your life?”
 - “Have you thought about when you would do it (today, tomorrow, next week)?”
 - “Have you thought about what method you would use?”
 - “What, if anything, has stopped you from doing it?”
- **Asking these questions** will help you to determine if your friend or family member is in immediate danger and if so, you can support them by getting them help.
 - A suicidal person should see a doctor or mental health professional immediately.
 - Calling 911 or going to a hospital emergency room are also good options to prevent a tragic suicide attempt or death.
 - Calling the National Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) is also a resource for you or the person you care about for help. Remember, always take thoughts of or plans for suicide seriously.
- **Never keep a plan for suicide a secret.** Don't worry about risking a friendship if you truly feel a life is in danger. It is better to lose a relationship or have someone upset with you due to violating their confidence than it is to go to a funeral or deal with the guilt of wishing you had taken action. If you help, they will likely come back and thank you for saving their life.
- **Don't try to minimize problems** or shame a person into changing their mind. Your opinion of a person's situation is irrelevant. Trying to convince a person suffering with a mental illness that it's not that bad, or that they have everything to live for may only increase their feelings of guilt and hopelessness. They will feel you don't understand or feel like they are wrong for feeling the way they do. Reassure them that help is available, that what they are experiencing is treatable, and that suicidal feelings are temporary.
- If you feel the person isn't in immediate danger, acknowledge the pain is legitimate and offer to work with them to get help. If you offer to help, it will be very important that you follow through with what you said you were going to do.
 - Help find a doctor or a mental health professional.
 - Participate in making the first phone call, or go along to the first appointment.
 - If you are in a position to help, don't assume that your persistence is unwanted or intrusive. Keep offering and be there for when they need you.

Warning Signs of Suicide

These signs may mean someone is at risk for suicide. Risk is greater if a behavior is new or has increased and if it seems related to a painful event, loss or change.

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself.
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawn or feeling isolated.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

Additional Warning Signs

- Preoccupation with death.
- Suddenly happier, calmer.
- Loss of interest in things one cares about.
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye.
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order.
- Giving things away, such as prized possessions.

If someone is not at imminent risk but is experiencing suicidal thoughts, action should be taken. Suicidal ideation should never be minimized. This action may include:

- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
- Call a local counseling office and schedule an urgent appointment.
- Call the EAP to speak with a licensed counselor 24/7.
- Text START to 741741 from anywhere in the USA, at any time, about any type of crisis.

If someone wants to kill themselves, has the means to do so and is at imminent risk, call 911 for emergency help.