

# BE AWARE OF THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

## *A suicidal person may:*

- Talk about death, and/or no reason to live.
- Be preoccupied with death and dying.
- Withdraw from friends and social activities.
- Have a recent severe loss (especially relationship) or threat of a significant loss.
- Experience drastic changes in behavior.
- Lose interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Prepare for death by making out a will (unexpectedly) and final arrangements.
- Give away prized possessions.
- Have attempted suicide before.
- Take unnecessary risks; be reckless, and /or impulsive.
- Lose interest in his/her personal appearance.
- Increase his/her use of alcohol or drugs.
- Express a sense of **hopelessness**.
- Be faced with a situation of humiliation or failure.
- Have a history of violence or hostility.
- Have been unwilling to “connect” with potential helpers

## BE AWARE OF FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, AND BEHAVIORS

Nearly everyone at some time in his or her life thinks about suicide. Most everyone decides to live because they come to realize that the crisis is temporary, but death is not. On the other hand, people in the midst of a crisis often perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel an utter loss of control. Frequently, they:

- Can't stop the pain *If you experience any of these feelings, get help!*
- Can't think clearly
- Can't make decisions *If you know someone who exhibits these feelings, offer help!*
- Can't see any way out
- Can't sleep, eat or work
- Can't get out of the depression
- Can't make the sadness go away
- Can't see the possibility of change
- Can't see themselves as worthwhile
- Can't get someone's attention
- Can't seem to get control

## TALK TO SOMEONE—YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Call the **HELP!Line** at 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) or (605) 339-4357

The **HELP!Line** is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week crisis line accredited by the American Association of Suicidology.

### Other Resources:

- A school counselor or private therapist
- A community mental health agency
- A family physician
- A religious/spiritual leader

Reprinted from American Association of Suicidology (202) 237-2280 Website: [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)



# Understanding and Helping the Suicidal Individual

## BE AWARE OF THE FACTS

1. Suicide is preventable. Most suicidal individuals desperately want to live; they are just unable to see alternatives to their problems.
2. Most suicidal individuals give definite warning of their suicidal intentions, but others are either unaware of the significance of these warnings or do not know how to respond to them.
3. Talking about suicide does not cause someone to be suicidal.
4. Approximately 30,000 Americans kill themselves every year. The number of suicide attempts is much greater and often results in serious injury.
5. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15-24, and it is the eleventh leading cause of death among all persons.
6. Youth (15-24) suicide rates increased more than 200% from the 1950's to the late 1970's. Following the late 1970's, the rates for youth suicide have remained stable.
7. The suicide rate is higher among the elderly (over 65) than any other age group.
8. Four times as many men kill themselves as compared to women, yet three to four times as many women attempt suicide as compared to men.
9. Suicide cuts across all age, economic, social, and ethnic boundaries.
10. Firearms are currently the most utilized method of suicide by essentially all groups (male, female, young, old, white and non-white).
11. Surviving family members not only suffer the trauma of losing a loved one to suicide, but also are themselves at higher risk for suicide and emotional problems.

## WAYS TO BE HELPFUL TO SOMEONE WHO IS THREATENING SUICIDE

1. Be aware. Learn the warning signs.
2. Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
3. Ask if he/she is thinking about suicide.
4. Be direct. Talk openly and freely about suicide.
5. Be willing to listen. Allow for expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
6. Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
7. Don't dare him/her to do it.
8. Don't give advice by making decisions for someone else to tell them to behave differently.
9. Don't ask "why." This encourages defensiveness.
10. Offer empathy, not sympathy.
11. Don't act shocked. This creates distance.
12. Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
13. Offer hope that alternatives are available. Do not offer glib reassurances; it only proves you don't understand.
14. Take action! Remove means! Get help from individuals or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

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