

Suicide Awareness and Prevention

The Facts

Suicide is a major health concern and a leading cause of death in the United States. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24 years.

In 2016, the last year with complete data, 44,965 people were reported to have died by suicide. Over a 17-year period, the total suicide rate increased 28% from 10.3 to 13.4 per 100,000. Men died by suicide 3.53x more often than women, but women attempted suicide 1.3x more often than men.

On average, there were 123 suicides per day. White males accounted for 7 of 10 suicides in 2016. A firearm was used in about half of all suicides. The rate of suicide was highest in males 65 and older, 32.3 per 100,000. (*Center for Disease Control*)

Higher suicide rates are found among veterans, in the LGBT community, and among those suffering from chronic pain, autism, and untreated clinical depression. (*Wikipedia*)

More Facts

For every successful suicide there are 50 to 150 attempts. 90% of all suicides occur in the home. 80% of those who died by suicide have tried before. 70% of all suicides happen between the hours of 3 p.m. and 12 a.m. Teens with untreated clinical depression are 25 times more likely to try suicide. Suicide is more likely to occur if a friend or relative has tried it. Suicide is a cry for help, not an act of death. Many deaths classified as accidents may well be suicides in children. (*Mental Health Association*)

Suicide Signs and Clues in Children and Teens

The following are warning signs that someone may be considering suicide:

1. Preoccupation with themes of death
2. Expressing suicidal thoughts, i.e., talking about wanting to die or being a burden to others or having feelings of hopelessness
3. Running away from home

4. Persistent boredom and/or difficulty concentrating
5. Psychosomatic complaints, i.e., feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
6. Giving away prized possessions or making final arrangements
7. Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
8. Withdrawal from family and/or friends
9. Personality changes, such as aggressive, hostile, rebellious, nervous, and /or apathetic behavior
10. Use or abuse of drugs and/or alcohol
11. Recent suicide of friend or relative
12. Previous suicide attempts
13. Increased anxiety or tension, perhaps triggered by being bullied at school
14. Changes in school performance
15. Sudden inexplicable euphoria or whirlwind activity after a spell of depression. This could be the time the decision is made.
16. Has a significant event occurred in the past month, i.e., loss of a parent, girl/boyfriend, etc.?
17. The loss or abandonment of a goal or dream
18. Increase of cuts, bruises, or accidents
19. Unnecessary risk-taking
20. Inability to look into your eyes

(American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the Mental Health Assoc.)

What to do

When you suspect that a child, teen, or young adult (or even an older adult, for that matter) may be suicidal, you may become nervous and anxious.

This is a normal feeling. It may help if you consider the following:

1. Believe or trust your suspicion that the person may be self-destructive.
2. Communicate your concern for the well-being of the person. Be an active listener and show your support.
3. Be direct. Talk openly and freely and ask direct questions about the person's intentions. Try to determine if the person has a plan for suicide (how, where, when). The more detailed the plan, the greater the risk.
4. Get professional help. Encourage the person to seek help from a school counselor, pastor, or someone who can help solve the

problems. If the person resists, you may have to get the necessary help for him or her.

Additional guidance and support can be found at:

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK(8255)

The National Crisis Text Line: Text “Hopeline” to 741-741

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

(Dave Bergner, SDS, PhD, MSW)