



Suicide Prevention



**Approximately 1 million
people die each year
from suicide**

What drives so many individuals to take their own lives?



To those not in the grips of suicidal depression and despair, it's so difficult to understand what drives so many individuals to take their own lives. But a suicidal person is in so much pain that he or she can see no other option.

Warning Signs

- o A suicidal person may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted. Most people who commit suicide don't want to die—they just want to stop hurting.
- o Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously.
- o If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. But talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life.



Suicide Warning Signs

Talking about suicide	Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm, such as "I wish I hadn't been born," "If I see you again..." and "I'd be better off dead."
Seeking out lethal means	Seeking access to guns, pills, knives, or other objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
Preoccupation with death	Unusual focus on death, dying, or violence. Writing poems or stories about death.
No hope for the future	Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped ("There's no way out"). Belief that things will never get better or change.
Self-loathing, self-hatred	Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Feeling like a burden ("Everyone would be better off without me").
Getting affairs in order	Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.
Saying goodbye	Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again.
Withdrawing from others	Withdrawing from friends and family. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.
Self-destructive behavior	Increased alcohol or drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sex. Taking unnecessary risks as if they have a "death wish."
Sudden sense of calm	A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to commit suicide.

Additional “teen” signs:

- o **Suicide warning signs in teens**
- o Additional warning signs that a teen may be considering suicide:
- o Change in eating and sleeping habits
- o Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- o Violent or rebellious behavior, running away
- o Drug and alcohol use
- o Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- o Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- o Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- o Not tolerating praise or rewards

You must...ACT!!

A = Alert your team (Speak up if you're worried)

C = Call for help (Respond quickly in a crisis)

T = Talk to your teen (Offer help and support)

DO

- o **Be yourself**. Let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone. The right words are often unimportant. If you are concerned, your voice and manner will show it.
- o **Listen**. Let the suicidal person unload despair, ventilate anger. No matter how negative the conversation seems, the fact that it exists is a positive sign.
- o **Be sympathetic**, non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting. Your friend or family member is doing the right thing by talking about his/her feelings.
- o **Offer hope**. Reassure the person that help is available and that the suicidal feelings are temporary. Let the person know that his or her life is important to you.
- o If the person says things like, "I'm so depressed, I can't go on," **ask the question**: "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" You are not putting ideas in their head, you are showing that you are concerned, that you take them seriously, and that it's OK for them to share their pain with you.

DON'T

- o **Argue** with the suicidal person. Avoid saying things like: "You have so much to live for," "Your suicide will hurt your family," or "Look on the bright side."
- o **Act shocked**, lecture on the value of life, or say that suicide is wrong.
- o **Promise confidentiality**. Refuse to be sworn to secrecy. A life is at stake and you may need to speak to a mental health professional in order to keep the suicidal person safe. If you promise to keep your discussions secret, you may have to break your word.
- o **Offer ways to fix their problems, or give advice**, or make them feel like they have to justify their suicidal feelings. It is not about how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting your friend or loved one.
- o **Blame yourself**. You can't "fix" someone's depression. Your loved one's happiness, or lack thereof, is not your responsibility.

Resources

- http://www.helpguide.org/mental/suicide_prevention.htm