

## Suicide Prevention – Why do people consider suicide?

There isn't a single reason that people consider suicide. One common feature of many people who consider suicide is that they experience intense psychological pain. Often they have a sense of hopelessness, believing there is no chance of improvement in the future or that life will continue to be unbearably painful.

Situational factors or events in a person's life may trigger a suicidal decision, but often the person has already considered suicide and has been in pain for some time prior to the actual suicide.

Suicide, in many but not all instances, can be prevented. We can prevent suicide by enhancing [factors that protect](#) us from suicide, being aware of what puts us at [risk for suicide](#), recognizing the [warning signs of suicide](#) and knowing [what to do](#) if someone appears suicidal.

## Suicide Prevention – Risk Factors

- Previous suicide act
- Mental disorders-particularly mood disorders
- Co-occurring mental and alcohol and substance abuse disorders
- Family history of suicide
- Hopelessness
- Impulsive and /or aggressive tendencies
- Barriers to accessing mental health treatment
- Relational, social, work, or financial loss
- Physical illness
- Easy access to lethal methods, especially guns
- Age, Culture, Lack of Connectedness
- Substance Abuse

## Suicide Prevention – Protective Factors

Factors that make it less likely that someone will suicide:

- Getting help for mental, physical and substance abuse disorders - Especially depression
- Restricted access to highly lethal methods of suicide – Especially firearms
- Family and community support
- An established relationship with a doctor, clergy, teacher, counselor or other professional who can help
- **Connectedness** to community, family, friends

## Suicide Prevention – Suicide Warning Signs

Warning signs go beyond risk factors for suicide. The warning signs are evident in what people say and do. When any of the warning signs listed below are present, it is important to take action immediately – know what to say and do to make a difference and prevent suicide when possible.

- Talking, reading or writing about suicide or death
- Talking about feeling worthless or helpless
- Saying things like, “I’m going to kill myself,” “I wish I was dead,” or “I shouldn’t have been born”
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving things away or returning borrowed items
- Self destructive or reckless behavior
- Significant change in behavior
- A sense of hopelessness about their situation – Those who feel hopeless may make statements like this:
  - “There is no point in going on”
  - “I can’t take it anymore”
  - “I have nothing left to live for”
  - “I can’t stop the pain”
  - I can’t seem to make decisions”
  - “I can’t live without \_\_\_\_\_”
  - “My life keeps getting worse and worse”
  - “I might as well kill myself”

The Warning signs of suicide are like a weather warning in Nebraska. Not only are conditions right for a storm, but one has been sighted and is on its way. The storm is on the radar and storm spotters have seen it traveling in our direction. We’ve made preparations during the watch, but now it is now time to take more direct action to protect the person who is suicidal.

**COMMUNITIES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY WIDELY DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ABOUT WARNING SIGNS ALONG WITH EXPECTATIONS THAT SUICIDE CAN BE PREVENTED IN MANY SITUATIONS.**

## TIPS FOR INTERVENING WITH SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL

### 1. ASK THE QUESTION.....

- “I have the feeling you are thinking about suicide but are having trouble bringing it up.”
- “Are you thinking about suicide?”
- “Sometimes people in certain situations feel suicidal. Have you been thinking about hurting yourself in any way?”

### 2. LISTEN

- LISTEN AND LOOK FOR WARNING SIGNS / RISK FACTORS
- Listen for what’s behind the distress
  - “You sound very [sad, hopeless, anxious etc]”
  - “It sounds like you have been having a very difficult time”

### 3. ASK ABOUT REASONS FOR LIVING AND PLANS THEY HAVE MADE FOR DYING

- Find out what is important to the person and why they may choose to live
- Ask How, Where, When, and if they have the means in place
  - “Do you have a plan to kill yourself?”
  - “Have you ever tried to hurt yourself before?”
  - “How serious are you about that today?”
  - “Have you thought of any ways you might do it?”
  - “Have you been drinking?”
  - “Do you have any guns (knives, pills razors) in the house?”
  - “Have you told anyone else how you feel?”

### 4. TAKE ACTION

- Remove means like guns & pills
- Offer your support in obtaining help from a professional
- Don’t leave the person alone once you have determined he or she is at risk
- Remind the person that seeking help for depression isn’t a sign of weakness and that chances for recovery are excellent
- Remember that you may have to break a confidence to save a life. The suicidal person may be angry.....but alive.