

To Reduce the Risk of Suicide, Know the Signs

The best way to prevent suicide is through education. Most suicides are related to depression, and, since we cannot always prevent depression (although we can frequently treat it successfully), we can learn to recognize and respond to cries for help from people who feel hopeless and helpless.

Verbal Cues

Direct messages include statements such as "I am going to commit suicide," or "I don't want to live anymore." Indirect messages include statements such as "Life isn't worth living," "I want to go to sleep and never wake up," "Soon it won't matter anymore," and "Do you think suicide is wrong?" These are subtler ways that people express their pain and hopelessness, but they just as surely express a desire to die.

Behavioral Cues

Each of the following behaviors by itself may not signal suicidal thinking or depression, but if several are present, there could be cause for serious concern.

- Depression, moodiness, sadness, or lack of energy
- Talking directly or indirectly about dying or committing suicide
- Changes in sleeping habits (too much, too little)
- Changes in eating habits (sudden weight gain, weight loss)
- Discouragement about the future, self-criticism
- Recent lack of concern about physical appearance, hygiene
- Withdrawal from social contacts or communication difficulty
- Giving away prized possessions
- Drop in school grades or work performance
- Acquiring the means for suicide (guns, drugs, rope)
- Making final arrangements, writing a will
- Taking unusual risks
- Increased drug or alcohol use
- Preoccupation with death through poetry and/or artwork
- Previous suicide attempts (80% of those who kill themselves have attempted it before)

Situational Cues

The following events frequently lead to crisis. For some people, internal and external resources are present in sufficient amounts to cope. For others, intense feelings coupled with a lack of external resources result in serious emotional crisis.

- End of a serious relationship
- Death of a loved one
- Divorce
- Loss of a job
- Financial difficulties
- Moving to a new location
- Isolation

Facts about Teen Suicide In the United States

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death of young people between the ages of 15 and 24.
- 5,000 young people complete suicide in the U.S. each year.
- Each year, there are approximately 10 youth suicides for every 100,000 youth.
- Each day, there are approximately 12 youth suicides.
- Every 2 hours and 11 minutes, a person under the age of 25 completes suicide.
- In the past 60 years, the suicide rate has quadrupled for males 15 to 24 years old, and has doubled for females of the same age.
- For every completed suicide by youth, it is estimated that 100 to 200 attempts are made.
- Firearms remain the most commonly used suicide method among youth, accounting for 49% of all completed suicides.

In Texas

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15 to 19 year olds.
- Almost as many teens die by suicide as those who die from all natural causes combined.
- From 1999 to 2004, a total of 13,257 suicide attempts made in the state of Texas resulted in death. 2,100 of these deaths were children and young adults from 10 to 24 years of age.
- For Texas high school students within a 12-month period:
 - 16% think seriously about suicide
 - 9% attempt suicide
 - 3% make a suicide attempt that requires medical attention

For more information :

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml>

How to recognize the signs of depression

<http://granthalliburton.org/knowthesigns.html>

A Helpful Guide for Parents and Teachers

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

http://www.sprc.org/featured_resources/customized/teachers.asp

