



Is someone you know thinking about Suicide?



The road, which ends in suicide, is usually a very long one. The process doesn't happen over night. People who become suicidal have usually suffered from a brain illness such as clinical depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar (manic depression) or schizophrenia for many years. Some have sought professional treatment; others have not. Some have felt suicidal in the past, for others, the suicidal thoughts are new. Regardless of the story, it is important to know that the majority of suicides are preventable.

The illnesses that cause suicide can distort thinking, so people can't think clearly or rationally. They may not know they have a treatable illness, or they may think that they can't be helped. Their illness can cause thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness, which may then lead to suicidal thoughts.

If depression is recognized and treated, suicidal thoughts can be eliminated. Many suicides can be prevented.

Symptoms of Depression:

- Persistent sad or empty mood.
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, guilt, pessimism, or worthlessness.
- Chronic fatigue or loss of interest in ordinary activities, including sex.
- Disturbances in eating or sleeping patterns.
- Irritability, increased crying; generalized anxiety (may include chronic fear of dying/convinced dying of incurable disease), panic attacks.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.
- Thoughts of suicide; suicide plans or attempts.
- Persistent physical symptoms or pains that do not respond to treatment - headaches, stomach problems, neck/back pain, joint pain, mouth pain
- Isolating oneself from friends and family.
- If you are concerned about any of these symptoms, ask the person how he or she is feeling.

Warning Signs of Suicide:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself.
- Looking for a way to kill oneself.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose.
- Talking about feeling trapped or being in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

If you are concerned about any of these symptoms, ask the person how he or she is feeling. Getting help is key to suicide prevention... the earlier, the better.

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If you see possible warning signs of suicide:

- **It's okay to ask the person, "Do you ever feel so bad that you think of suicide?"** Don't worry about planting the idea in someone's head. Suicidal thoughts are common with depressive illnesses, although not all people have them. If a person has been thinking of suicide, he will be relieved and grateful that you were willing to be so open and nonjudgmental. It shows a person you truly care and take him seriously.
- **If you get a yes to your question, question the individual further. Ask, "Do you have a plan?"** If yes, ask, **"Do you know how you would do it?" "Do you know when?"** (today, next week?) **"Do you have access to what you would use?"** Asking these questions will give you an idea if the person is in immediate danger. If you feel she is, do not leave her alone! A suicidal person must see a doctor or psychiatrist immediately. You may have to take her to the nearest hospital emergency room or call 911. Always take thoughts of or plans for suicide seriously.
- **Never keep a plan for suicide a secret.** Don't worry about breaking a bond of friendship at this point. Friendships can be fixed. **And never call a person's bluff, or try to minimize his problems by telling him he has everything to live for or how hurt his family would be.** This will only increase his guilt and feelings of hopelessness. He needs to be reassured that there is help, that what he is feeling is treatable and that his suicidal feelings are temporary.
- **If you feel the person isn't in immediate danger, you can say things like, "I can tell you're really hurting", and "I care about you and will do my best to help you."** Then follow through - help her find a doctor or a mental health professional. Be by her side when she makes that first phone call, or go along with her to her first appointment. It's not a good idea to leave it up to a person to get help on her own. A supportive person can mean so much to someone who's in pain.

In order to save lives, it's critical that we recognize the symptoms of these biological diseases that cause suicide. There is still stigma associated with these illnesses, which can prevent people from getting help. Your willingness to talk about depression and suicide with a friend, family member, or co-worker can go a long way in reducing stigma. Education is the key to understanding the tragedy of suicide that, in many cases, can be prevented. Oftentimes, it is helpful asking the questions more than once and in different ways. This will allow you to get a better description on how he is feeling and will ultimately help with offering them the necessary help they need.



Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).



SAVE (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education)
www.save.org



Crisis Text Line
Text "Hello" to 741-741
to start a conversation.