

# **Suicide - Symptoms and Danger Signs**

## **Warning Signs of Suicide**

Ideation (thinking about suicide)

Substance use or abuse (increased or change in substance)

Purposelessness (no sense of purpose or belonging)

Anger

Trapped (feeling like there is no way out)

Hopelessness (there is nothing to live for, no hope or optimism)

Withdrawal (from family, friends, work, school, activities, hobbies)

Anxiety (restlessness, irritability)

Recklessness (high risk-taking behavior)

Mood disturbance (dramatic change in mood)

## **Additional Warning Signs of Suicide**

Talking about suicide.

Statements about hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness.

Preoccupation with death.

Suddenly happier, calmer. Once the decision is made they feel relief.

Loss of interest in things one cares about.

Visiting or calling people one cares about.

Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order.

Giving things away, such as prized possessions.

**A suicidal person urgently needs to see a doctor or mental health professional.**

## **Someone You Know is Suicidal**

The Journal of the American Medical Association has reported that 90% of all suicides occur during or following a depressive episode. Awareness, education, and treatment are the keys to suicide prevention.

### **Know What to Watch For**

Symptoms of Depression  
Warning Signs of Suicide

### **Know What to Do**

Stigma associated with mental illnesses can prevent people from getting help. Your willingness to talk about depression and suicide with a friend, family member, or co-worker can be the first step in getting help and preventing suicide. The church gives someone the option to talk without a permanent medical record being made.

### **If You See the Warning Signs of Suicide...**

**Begin a dialogue by asking questions.** Suicidal thoughts are common with depressive illnesses and your willingness to talk about it in a non-judgmental, non-confrontational way can be the help a person needs to seeking professional help. Questions okay to ask:

"Do you ever feel so badly that you think about suicide?"

"Do you have a plan to commit suicide or take your life?"

"Have you thought about when you would do it (today, tomorrow, next week)?"

"Have you thought about what method you would use?"

"Have you already acquired the needed items?"

Asking these questions will help you to determine if your friend or family members is in immediate danger, and get help if needed. A suicidal person should see a doctor or mental health professional immediately. Calling **911** or going to a hospital emergency room are also good options to prevent a tragic suicide attempt or death. Calling the National Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK** is also a resource for you or the person you care about for help. Remember, always take thoughts of or plans for suicide seriously.

**Never keep a plan for suicide a secret.** Don't worry about risking a friendship if you truly feel a life is in danger. You have bigger things to worry about-someone's life might be in danger! It is better to lose a relationship from violating a confidence than it is to go to a funeral. And most of the time they will come back and thank you for saving their life.

**Don't try to minimize problems or shame a person into changing their mind.** Your opinion of a person's situation is irrelevant. Trying to convince a person suffering with a mental illness that it's not that bad, or that they have everything to live for may only increase their feelings of guilt and hopelessness. Reassure them that help is available, that depression is treatable, and that suicidal feelings are temporary. Life **can** get better!

**If you feel the person isn't in immediate danger, acknowledge the pain as legitimate and offer to work together to get help.** Make sure you follow through. This is one instance where you must be tenacious in your follow-up. Help find a doctor or a mental health professional, participate in making the first phone call, or go along to the first appointment. If you're in a position to help, don't assume that your persistence is unwanted or intrusive. Risking your feelings to help save a life is a risk worth taking.

**Always have a plan.** Make arrangements for additional help or follow-up. An appointment with a Doctor or follow-up appointment with you. If you feel the need and they have articulated they are planning to harm themselves Law Enforcement can be called and will assure the person gets to the hospital. If you feel it is not that urgent arrange for a friend or family member to stay with the person for the night and have another meeting the following day. Don't minimize and always err on the side of caution.