

Suicide intervention and prevention

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Suicide knows no boundaries. There is no typical suicide victim. It happens to young and old, rich and poor. Many people at some point in their lives think or talk about suicide, but come to realize that the crisis is temporary and death is permanent. People having a crisis sometimes perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel that their life is out of control.

Research suggests that the majority of people who attempt suicide literally do something to let others know their intentions before they act. These warning signs consist of personal behaviors, verbal and non-verbal communications, and include but are not limited to the following:

- Changes in personality: sad, withdrawn, irritable, anxious, tired, indecisive and apathetic.
- Changes in behavior: can't concentrate on school, work or routine tasks.
- Changes in sleep pattern: bedridden, constant fatigue, insomnia and frequent nightmares.
- Changes in eating habits: loss of appetite and weight or overeating.
- Loss of interest in friends, hobbies or other activities previously enjoyed.

- Anxiety about money, personal health and other illnesses, either real or imagined.
- Fear of losing control, going crazy or harming self or others.
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and low self-esteem.
- Feelings of overwhelming guilt, shame, self-hatred and no hope for the future.
- Drug and alcohol related problems or abuse.
- Loss of religious or spiritual faith or in other personal beliefs or philosophies.
- The giving away of prized possessions.
- Previous suicide attempts.
- Talks about committing suicide.
- Talks about putting together a will.

Most depressions contain some element of grief and/or recent losses tied to death, divorce, separation, broken relationships, personal status, etc. Watch for statements like “nobody cares”, “everyone will be better off without me”, and “I wish I were dead”. Mental and emotional illnesses such as bi-polar disorders are often tied to suicidal feelings. Many suicides occur in the winter months or after the holidays. Some professionals claim being trapped inside and the grayness of the outdoors during the winter months can lead to winter blues and depression, while others claim the after holiday blues and incoming bills can lead to depression as well.

Most people can be helped in getting through their moment of crisis if they have someone who will spend time with them and take them seriously and help them talk about their thoughts and feelings. If you are someone you know is going through tough times and are depressed or contemplating suicide, there are programs and places available to help. Please remember, “You’ve got a Friend”.

For further assistance please contact your local law enforcement agency, the 24 hour Crisis Center at 244-7444 or the Hope Line at 1-800-SUICIDE.

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