

SUICIDE: Signs and getting help

Suicide can happen to people of any age, ethnicity or gender. Everyone can help prevent suicide by knowing the warning signs and how to help. Many people who commit suicide have a mental health condition such as depression, bipolar disorder or addiction. But, some people who commit suicide were never diagnosed with a mental health issue.

A person thinking about suicide may have a sudden change in behavior or start saying things they don't normally say. Sometimes, these things happen after a painful event, a loss or a major life change. It also can be due to a brain chemical imbalance, even if the person's life seems normal. Watch for these possible signs:

- Talk about wanting to die or looking for ways to kill themselves
- Search online about suicide
- Say they feel empty, trapped or hopeless
- Think they are a burden to others
- Avoid family and friends
- Start sleeping too much or not enough
- Eat more or less than usual, have appetite changes
- Talk about death often
- Have major mood swings such as anger, rage, anxiety, shame or sudden relief
- Give away some of their things

A person may seem happy, but even one of these symptoms could be a sign of mental health issues. Suicide and severe depression can affect anyone. If you see even one of these signs, try to help the person or get them help.



What to do

If you think someone might be thinking about suicide:

- *Ask them if they are thinking of suicide or harming themselves.* Studies show that asking this question does not "put thoughts in their head."
- *Try to get them away from things that could harm them.* If possible, get them away from weapons, substances or other things that could be used to commit suicide.
- *Listen.* Let them talk about how they are feeling.
- *Get expert help.* Have the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's number in your phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The TTY line for deaf/hard of hearing is 1-800-799-4889.
- *Connect them with helpful people.* Maybe a family member, friend, spiritual advisor or mental health professional can help.
- *Keep in touch with them.* If the person receives treatment, follow up with them afterward.

If the person is actively trying to commit suicide or has already tried, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute of Mental Health