

UNDERSTANDING AND HELPING THE SUICIDAL PERSON

Be Aware of the Warning Signs

Are you or someone you love at risk of suicide? Get the facts and take appropriate action.

Get help immediately by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-8255 for a referral should you witness, hear, or see anyone exhibiting any one or more of the following:

Someone threatening to hurt or kill him/herself, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill him/herself.

Someone looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means.

Someone talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person.

Seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or calling 1-800-273-8255 for a referral should you witness, hear, or see someone you know exhibiting any one or more of the following:

Hopelessness
Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
Feeling trapped - like there's no way out
Increased alcohol or drug use
Withdrawing from friends, family and society
Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
Dramatic mood changes
No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life

Here is an easy mnemonic to remember these warning signs:

IS PATH WARM?

I	Ideation
S	Substance Abuse
P	Purposelessness
A	Anxiety
T	Trapped
H	Hopelessness
W	Withdrawal
A	Anger
R	Recklessness
M	Mood Changes

What To Do

Here are some ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide:

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.

- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don't dare him or her to do it.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Be Aware of Feelings

Many people at some time in their lives think about completing suicide. Most decide to live because they eventually come to realize that the crisis is temporary and death is permanent. On other hand, people having a crisis sometimes perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel an utter loss of control. These are some of the feelings and thoughts they experience:

- Can't stop the pain
- Can't think clearly
- Can't make decisions
- Can't see any way out
- Can't sleep, eat or work
- Can't get out of depression
- Can't make the sadness go away
- Can't see a future without pain
- Can't see themselves as worthwhile
- Can't get someone's attention
- Can't seem to get control

If you experience these feelings, get help!

If someone you know exhibits these symptoms, offer help!

Contact:

- A community mental health agency
- A private therapist or counselor
- A school counselor or psychologist
- A family physician
- A suicide prevention or crisis center

Questions or comments? [Contact us!](#)
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The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK, provides access to trained telephone counselors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.