



See Someone Save Someone

Suicide Prevention Guide

Awareness & Understanding

Suicide is a complicated and sensitive topic that may cause feelings of discomfort. It is natural to feel uncomfortable or upset when reading about it. You can always take a break or talk to a trusted person about your feelings. This guide provides information on understanding suicide in order to help prevent it.

Suicidal thoughts are often caused by mental illness or specific life factors that cause an intense negative impact on an individual's mental health. Currently, one in five adults in the U.S. struggle with a mental illness (NIMH). Not everyone who has a mental illness is suicidal, and anyone can struggle with suicidal ideation. A person with a mental health condition may not feel in control of their emotions or be able to establish positive interactions with others. Disability caused by mental health conditions may not be innately visible to those around them, so many individuals can feel negatively judged or unseen. This lack of support increases isolation, which may worsen their condition.



The first step to preventing suicide is understanding the importance of **mental health**. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. (CDC)

Risk Factors factors that increase an individual's risk of suicide

Individual Risk Factors

- Previous suicide attempt
- History of depression or other mental illnesses
- Serious illness such as chronic pain
- Criminal/legal concerns
- Financial concerns or job loss
- Current or prior history of adverse childhood experiences
- Violence victimization and/or perpetration
- Sense of hopelessness
- Impulsive tendencies
- Substance use

Relationship Risk Factors

- Family/loved one's history of suicide
- Loss of relationship(s) or death of a loved one
- High conflict or violent relationships
- Social isolation
- Bullying or abuse

Societal Risk Factors

- Unsafe media portrayals of suicide
- Stigma associated with mental illness and seeking help
- Easy access to lethal means of suicide

Community Risk Factors

- Lack of access to healthcare
- Suicide cluster in the community
- Stress of acculturation
- Community violence
- Historical trauma
- Discrimination



1

Colorado
National
Monument





An individual who is contemplating suicide is often experiencing intense emotional pain that they feel they can no longer endure. They most likely feel hopeless and disconnected from others. Although we cannot solve the root causes of suicidal ideation, we can provide empathy and emergency response if needed.

Objectives

- 1. See Someone:** Learn the signs that a person may be suicidal so you can recognize it in a loved one, family member, friend, coworker, or acquaintance.
- 2. Save Someone:** Know the steps to take so you can minimize the time gap between the first mention of suicide or witnessed behavior(s) and getting help.



See Someone

Early detection and due diligence can be lifesaving. If you feel a sense that something is off, or notice any of these warning signs, take steps to help. Some of these signs on their own may not always raise suspicion, but trust your gut and be alert if you notice one or more of the following signs.

Warning Signs

Comments

- Explicit threats to hurt or end one's life
- Expressing that they feel trapped, hopeless, or helpless
- Referencing plans to escape pain
- Implying they won't see you again or be around in the future
- "Nothing matters because it will be over soon."
- "I can't deal with this anymore"
- "Things will be better soon"
- "Life is not worth living"
- "I am a burden to others."
- "I wish I were dead"

Behaviors

- Planning to go somewhere with cliff access
- Avoiding eye contact or trying to avoid speaking to you
- Possession of firearms, alcohol, pills, or restraints
- Giving away money or personal possessions
- Acting recklessly

Mood/Appearance

- Depressed or apathetic demeanor
- Displaying anxiety, agitation, or restlessness
- Tearfulness, crying or shaking
- Distant, numb expression
- Intoxication





Save Someone

In an emergency, we want to get responders on the scene as quickly as possible. In a non-emergency we want to talk to the individual calmly and empathetically.

How to Respond in an Immediate Emergency

If an individual is showing signs of immediate harm to themselves or others, immediately call 911. Stay close, but do not jeopardize your safety. If the suicidal individual becomes agitated and you feel unsafe, you should remove yourself from the situation and try to get help from others.

How to Respond When You Notice Signs

Step 1. Talk With Them

If someone seems distressed or you see certain warning signs, engaging in conversation with them or asking if they are doing okay is a good way to begin. It may give you more information that will allow you to determine if they are feeling suicidal. Or it may be enough to help on its own. Many people who are feeling suicidal feel isolated from others. The simple act of showing you care can be a powerful disruption from suicidal ideation.

If you have a close relationship with the individual and are concerned for their wellbeing, ask to speak with them alone and in a secure, comfortable location. You can start by telling them you have noticed some things that have concerned you and ask how their mental health has been recently.

Step 2. Support Them While They Share

It is important to be calm and empathetic when speaking to someone that may be suicidal. If they share how they are feeling or what they are experiencing, attempt to listen without expressing judgment or reacting harshly. It may feel uncomfortable, but listening to what is distressing

Do's



- Be empathetic and calm
- Ask if they are doing okay
- Listen respectfully

Don'ts



- React in a shocked or harsh manner
- Respond judgmentally
- Give advice/lectures or try to convince them suicide is not the answer





Save Someone

someone is one of the best ways to prevent suicide. Do not try to convince them that life is worth living or try to give advice. They will not be receptive to that in their current state. It is best to focus on showing empathy and listening calmly instead.

Step 3. Determine their Risk

If they makes statements that give you reason to believe they are planning to attempt suicide, it may be wise to directly ask, “Have you had thoughts of suicide?” Suicide prevention experts say discussing suicide directly and compassionately with a person at risk is key to preventing it (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention). Their response may also provide you with confirmation on if they intend to attempt suicide. The more specific their plan (steps, timing, means), the higher the risk.

Step 4. Help Them Get Help

If they plan to attempt suicide, help them reach out to a mental health professional. To reach the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, dial 988. Or to access the Colorado Department of Health and Environment line call 1-844-493-TALK (8255).

Ask them what resources or actions they have taken in the past to help their mental health. If you can, try to help them set up a plan for receiving mental health support from a professional or support group.

You may have noticed warning signs that are not tied to suicidal ideation or cause for serious concern. If after speaking to them, you do not believe they are suicidal, tell them you are here to support them. Check in with them later to make sure they are doing okay. They may have told you they are not suicidal because they do not want you to be concerned or interfere. Use your best judgement and look out for them.

Afterwards

Having these types of conversations is never easy. Afterwards you will probably feel some intense feelings, especially if you have a close relationship with the person. Take time to take care of your own mental health after an incident like this. Talk with someone you are close to, without sharing details that would breach the trust of the person who confided in you.



Reminder

The purpose of this guide is to equip you with tools to navigate these difficult situations should you encounter them, without imposing any sense of duty or responsibility upon you. It is normal to feel negative feelings after experiencing any incident like this, no matter what the outcome was. Take steps to take care of yourself and your wellbeing.





Conclusion

We need to take steps to ensure our own wellbeing after an incident occurs. Access the resources provided to you and reach out to others for support. Review the recap of important information so you can feel prepared if you find yourself in a potential situation.

Takeaways

By recognizing the signs and symptoms of suicidal behavior, we can help save lives. Remember, if you have a concern, reach out. Though a direct and vulnerable conversation may be difficult or uncomfortable, it could be an important turning point for their recovery.

In the event that someone you know ended their life, do not blame yourself. You may feel shame or guilt, but no matter what steps you did or did not take, you are not at fault. We can prepare ourselves to notice the signs and follow the steps, but sometimes the situation is out of our control.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please reach out to a medical professional or someone you trust.

Resources

[Suicide Prevention | Healthy Mesa County](#)

Suicide Prevention Mesa County has many helpful resources including resources for crisis, prevention, survivors, and classes for suicide prevention and mental health.

[Suicide Prevention | CDC](#)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

988 or 800-273-TALK (8255)

Colorado Crisis Text Line:

Text "CO" to 741741



Recap

See Someone:

Be alert for concerning comments, behaviors, or appearances like:

- Visibly emotionally distressed
- Avoiding eye contact or avoiding engaging you in conversation
- Making comments about hopelessness or escaping pain
- Possessing lethal means like firearms or pills
- Possessing substances or seeming intoxicated
- Giving away items or money

Save Someone:

- In an emergency, call 911
- Listen empathetically and speak calmly
- Help make a plan to help their mental health
- Check up on them

