

ACT now to stop a suicide

What to look for -- and what to do -- if you are concerned about someone

Tragically, suicide is a fatal response to a treatable illness, usually depression.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Part I Suicide Risk Questionnaire

Have you heard someone say:

- Life isn't worth living
- My family would be better off without me
- Next time I'll take enough pills to do the job right
- Take my (prized collection, valuables)--I don't need this stuff anymore
- I won't be around to deal with that
- You'll be sorry when I'm gone
- I won't be in your way much longer
- I just can't deal with everything--life's too hard
- Nobody understands me--nobody feels the way I do
- There's nothing I can do to make it better
- I'd be better off dead
- I feel like there is no way out

Have you observed:

- Getting affairs in order (paying off debts, changing a will)
- Giving away articles of either personal or monetary value
- Signs of planning a suicide such as obtaining a weapon or writing a suicide note

Part II Depression Risk Questionnaire

Have you noticed the following signs of depression:

- Depressed mood
- Change in sleeping patterns (too much/little, disturbances)
- Change in weight or appetite
- Speaking and/or moving with unusual speed or slowness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, slowed thinking or indecisiveness
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, or guilt
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

If depression seems possible, have you also noticed:

- Extreme anxiety, agitation, or enraged behavior
- Excessive drug and/or alcohol use or abuse
- Neglect of physical health
- Feelings of hopelessness or desperation

Questionnaire interpretation

If you checked circles under:

- Part I only: Your friend may be at risk for suicide and should seek professional help immediately.
- Part II only: Your friend may be suffering from depression and should seek further evaluation with a mental health professional or his or her primary care physician.
- Parts I and II: The suicide risk is even higher: strongly encourage your friend to seek professional help immediately.

WHAT TO DO if you suspect someone you care about is considering suicide

ACT: Acknowledge, Care and find Treatment.

1. Acknowledge

- Do take it seriously.
70% of all people who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.
- Do be willing to listen.
Even if professional help is needed, your friend or loved one will be more willing to seek help if you have listened to him or her.

2. Care

- Do voice your concern.
Take the initiative to ask what is troubling your friend, co-worker or loved one, and attempt to overcome any reluctance on their part to talk about it.

3. Treatment

- Do get professional help immediately.
If the person seems willing to accept treatment, do one of the following...
 - Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) to find resources in your area.
 - Bring him or her to a local emergency room or community mental health center.
Your friend will be more likely to seek help if you accompany him or her.
 - Contact his or her primary care physician or mental health provider.
 If the person seems unwilling to accept treatment...
 - Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or a local emergency room for advice.
and if all else fails... call 9-1-1.

What NOT to do...

- × Don't try to cheer the person up, or tell them to snap out of it.
- × Don't assume the situation will take care of itself.
- × Don't be sworn to secrecy.
- × Don't argue or debate moral issues.
- × Don't risk your personal safety. Just leave, and then call the police.

Did you know that...

- 70% of people who commit suicide tell someone about it in advance, and most are not in treatment.
- Sometimes those contemplating suicide talk as if they are saying goodbye or going away forever.
- Nearly 50% of suicide victims have a positive blood alcohol level.
- Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed.
- Serious depression can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often is expressed instead as a loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities that were once enjoyable.
- Between 20 and 40 percent of people who kill themselves have previously attempted suicide.
- Those who have made serious attempts are at much higher risk for actually taking their lives.