



PREVENTING SUICIDE

What You Should Know

Educational Packet



Our Mission

To prevent suicide through training, education, advocacy, and supporting suicide loss survivors.

About SAVE

SAVE is a national nonprofit working to end the tragedy of suicide through education and training programs, advocacy work at the state and national level, and providing support to those impacted by the tragedy of suicide.

What We Do

Educate individuals at risk of suicide and those who interact with them.

- Distribute complimentary educational resources to local community organizations.
- Deliver suicide prevention awareness presentations to various groups and communities.

Train individuals and community stakeholders to identify those who may be at risk for suicide and how to support them.

- Educate high school and college students on cultivating help-seeking behaviors through The Green Bandana Project program.
- Grant free access to One Step Ahead- Suicide Prevention Employee Training: A 1-hr, self-paced, online training for the general workforce.
- Provide tailored, affordable, and convenient training to high-risk occupations like the construction industry.

Advocate for those impacted by suicide at the state and national level.

- Advocate for more robust public and private resources to support mental health and suicide prevention programs and policies.
- Distribute concise policy briefs to state and federal legislators.
- Provide testimony in support of legislation at the state and federal level.

Support individuals, families, and communities after a suicide loss.

- Connect families with other suicide loss survivors through the suicide loss survivor support group database.
- Honor the lives of those lost to suicide through the Named Memorial Program.
- Provide free support materials on suicide grief.



Who We Serve

- Youth ages 14-23
- Adults and Seniors
- High Risk Occupations (Law Enforcement, construction workers, emergency healthcare workers, athletes and more).
- Suicide Loss Survivors

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Common Misconceptions of Suicide



MISCONCEPTIONS

Suicide is a selfish act

Many people believe that those who die by suicide are selfish because they leave behind grieving loved ones. In reality, suicide is often a result of overwhelming emotional pain, and individuals who die by suicide may not be in a state of mind to consider the impact on others.

Suicide can't be prevented

Suicide is preventable, and interventions can be effective. It's essential to provide support and resources to those in crisis and to seek professional help when needed.

Talking about suicide may encourage the idea

Some people fear that discussing suicide openly will give someone the idea or permission to act on it. However, open and empathetic communication about suicide can actually be a crucial first step in helping someone who is struggling.

Suicidal people just want attention


This is a harmful stereotype that dismisses the pain and struggles of individuals who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. Most people who contemplate suicide are dealing with genuine emotional pain and suffering.

Suicide is a rational option for really bad situations

Suicide is often the result of distorted thinking, extreme emotional pain, and a sense of hopelessness. It is not a rational decision, but rather, a desperate response to overwhelming circumstances.

It's impossible to know if someone is contemplating suicide

Many individuals who contemplate suicide may appear fine on the surface; however, they often do or say something that indicates they are struggling. Pay attention to these indicators (warning signs of suicide). Reach out to people who may be struggling, even if they seem outwardly okay.

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Why do people die by suicide?



People may contemplate suicide for a variety of complex and interconnected reasons, and it's important to note that each individual's situation is unique. While it's impossible to pinpoint a single cause for suicide, several common factors are frequently associated with suicidal thoughts and behaviors. These include:

- **Mental Health Issues:** Mental health conditions, such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse disorders, can significantly increase the risk of suicide. These conditions can lead to feelings of hopelessness, despair, and intense emotional pain.
- **Psychological Factors:** Some individuals may experience overwhelming emotional distress or psychological pain that becomes unbearable. They may perceive suicide as a way to escape this pain and suffering.
- **Environmental and Life Stressors:** Difficult life circumstances, such as financial problems, relationship issues, bullying, academic or work-related stress, loss of a loved one, or a major life change (like a divorce or job loss), can contribute to feelings of hopelessness and despair.
- **Social Isolation:** Feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and a lack of support can increase the risk of suicide. People who feel disconnected from others may not have access to emotional support or resources.
- **Previous Suicide Attempts:** A history of previous suicide attempts is a significant risk factor for future attempts. Individuals who have survived previous attempts may continue to struggle with suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
- **Access to Lethal Means:** Easy access to lethal methods, such as firearms or medications, can increase the likelihood of a suicide attempt.
- **Lack of Access to Mental Health Care:** Limited access to mental health services or the stigma associated with seeking help can deter individuals from seeking treatment for their mental health issues.
- **Family History of Suicide:** A family history of suicide or a history of suicide among close friends can increase an individual's risk, potentially due to genetic, environmental, or learned factors.
- **Substance Abuse:** Substance abuse can impair judgment, exacerbate mental health issues, and increase impulsivity, making individuals more vulnerable to suicidal thoughts and actions.
- **Perceived Burden on Others:** Some people who contemplate suicide believe they are a burden to their loved ones and think that their death would relieve the perceived burden.
- **Cultural and Societal Factors:** Cultural and societal norms, beliefs, and attitudes about mental health and suicide can influence an individual's willingness to seek help or discuss their struggles openly.

! If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts, seek help immediately from mental health professionals or crisis hotlines. Dial 988 for crisis support. Suicidal thoughts are treatable, and support is available to help individuals find hope and healing.

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Warning Signs, Risk Factors, and Protective Factors of Suicide



Understanding the warning signs, risk factors, and protective factors associated with suicide is essential for identifying individuals who may be at risk. It's important to note that suicide is a complex issue influenced by various factors, and no single factor or set of factors can predict it with absolute certainty.

WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs of suicide are observable behaviors, actions, or expressions that may indicate that someone is at risk of attempting or thinking about suicide.

- Talking about suicide, expressing thoughts like “I want to kill myself” or “I wish I were dead”
- Acquiring means to take one’s own life, like buying a gun or stockpiling pills
- Withdrawing from social contact and desiring isolation
- Experiencing mood swings, going from emotional highs to deep discouragement
- Showing fixation on death, dying, or violence
- Expressing feelings of being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped or hopeless in a situation
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Changing normal routine, including eating or sleeping patterns
- Engaging in risky or self-destructive behaviors, such as substance abuse or reckless driving
- Giving away possessions or organizing affairs without an apparent reason
- Saying goodbye to people as if it’s the final farewell
- Displaying personality changes, severe anxiety, or agitation.

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors for suicide are characteristics or circumstances that increase an individual's likelihood of experiencing suicidal thoughts or engaging in suicidal behaviors. Having risk factors does not necessarily mean a person will attempt suicide.

- **Mental Health Issues:** Most people who die by suicide have a diagnosed mental health condition, such as depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia.
- **Previous Suicide Attempts:** A history of previous suicide attempts is a significant risk factor for future attempts.
- **Family History:** A family history of suicide or mental health issues can increase an individual's risk.
- **Substance Abuse:** Alcohol or drug abuse increases the risk of suicide.
- **Access to Lethal Means:** Easy access to lethal methods, such as firearms, can increase the likelihood of suicide.
- **Chronic Illness or Pain:** Chronic physical or emotional pain can contribute to suicidal thoughts.
- **Isolation:** Social isolation and a lack of support can increase vulnerability.
- **Recent Loss or Trauma:** Experiencing recent losses, such as the death of a loved one or a job loss, can be risk factors.
- **Impulsivity:** Impulsive behavior or a history of impulsive acts increases risk.
- **Gender:** Men are more likely to die by suicide, while women are more likely to attempt suicide.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors are characteristics, conditions, or factors that can reduce an individual's risk of suicide.

- **Strong Social Support:** Having a network of friends and family who provide emotional support can be protective.
- **Access to Mental Health Care:** Having access to mental health treatment and support can reduce risk.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** Effective problem-solving skills and coping strategies can help individuals manage stress and adversity.
- **Positive Life Events:** Positive life changes, such as marriage or the birth of a child, can be protective.
- **Sense of Purpose:** Having a sense of purpose or meaning in life can be a protective factor.
- **Connectedness:** Feeling connected to a community, cultural, or religious group can be protective.
- **Restrictions on Access to Lethal Means:** Limiting access to lethal methods, such as securing firearms, can reduce risk.

Helping Someone Who is Suicidal: What You Can Do



You can help someone who is thinking of suicide, and your support can make a significant difference in their life. Here are some steps to assist someone who may be contemplating suicide:

- **Take It Seriously:** If someone confides in you about their suicidal thoughts or intentions, take it seriously. Avoid minimizing their feelings or telling them to "snap out of it."
- **Listen Non-Judgmentally:** Create a safe and non-judgmental space for them to talk about their feelings. Let them express their thoughts and emotions without criticism or judgment.
- **Show Empathy and Compassion:** Let the person know that you care about their well-being. Show empathy and understanding by saying things like, "I'm here for you," or "I'm sorry you're feeling this way."
- **Ask Directly About Suicide:** While it may be uncomfortable, ask the person directly if they are thinking about suicide. This can open up an honest conversation and allow them to express their feelings.
- **Keep Them Safe:** If the person has a plan and access to means (e.g., pills, firearms) for suicide, try to remove or restrict access to those means. This can be a crucial step in preventing a suicide attempt.
- **Encourage Professional Help:** Encourage the person to seek professional help from a mental health therapist, counselor, or psychiatrist. Offer to help them find resources and make appointments.
- **Offer to Accompany Them:** If they are willing, offer to accompany them to their appointments or crisis helplines. Sometimes, the presence of a supportive person can make it easier for them to seek help.
- **Stay Connected:** Keep in touch with the person regularly, even if it's just a text or a quick check-in. Let them know you care about their well-being.
- **Involve Trusted Individuals:** If you're concerned about their safety, involve other trusted friends or family members who can provide support and assistance.
- **Don't Promise Secrecy:** While you should respect their privacy, do not promise to keep their suicidal thoughts a secret if they are in immediate danger. Their safety should be the top priority.
- **Know Crisis Helplines:** Be aware of crisis helplines and hotlines in your area, such as the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (dial 988 for support) or Crisis Text Line (Text SAVE to 741-741). Encourage the person to call these resources if they need immediate help.

Remember, you are not expected to be a mental health professional, but your support and compassion can play a crucial role in helping someone who is thinking of suicide.

Encourage them to seek professional help and don't hesitate to dial 988 for crisis support.

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