

# Youth suicide prevention

## Understanding the problem

- Suicide is a preventable tragedy and the second leading cause of death among youth aged 10-24 in the United States.
- More than 6,000 young lives are lost to suicide annually, highlighting the urgency of prevention efforts.

## Suicide prevention strategies

Understanding these approaches can help save young lives, support youth in crisis, and foster a more compassionate society for all.

- **Talk about mental health and suicide and encourage open communication.** Don't wait for a young person to approach you. If they seem sad, anxious, depressed, or are visibly struggling, reach out to them. Ask what's wrong, listen attentively, and offer your unwavering support. Normalize conversations about mental health and suicide prevention.
- **Foster supportive and protective environments.** Build strong, positive relationships at home, school, and in the community. Ensure safe and affirming spaces and resources are available for youth at higher risk, like those who identify as LGBTQ+.
- **Take a suicide prevention training.** All adults such as educators, coaches, and parents can equip themselves with the skills to recognize warning signs and know how to support someone who is at-risk of suicide.
- **Encourage and talk openly about healthy behaviors.** Talk to young people about the risks of spending too much time alone and excessive use of social media and work together on ways to enjoy both in moderation. Encourage young people to get adequate sleep, eat well, and engage in exercise.
- **Support treatment and professional help.** Ensure youth have access to counseling, therapy, and crisis intervention services. Provide support and encouragement to stick to a treatment plan.
- **Limit or completely remove access to lethal means.** Safely store firearms outside the home or in a secure place, discard old medications, and dispose of other potentially dangerous items.
- **Pay attention.** Listen to young people and notice changes in behavior. Always take a threat of suicide seriously.

## SUPPORT RESOURCES

### 988 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE

The most comprehensive source of information about local resources and services in the country

Call or text 988 | [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

### SAMHSA TREATMENT LOCATOR

Confidential and anonymous resource for people seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders in the US and its territories

Call 1-833-888-1553 | [findtreatment.gov](https://findtreatment.gov)

# Youth suicide prevention

## Recognizing the warning signs

Warning signs of suicide are indicators that suggest someone may be thinking about or planning to take their own life and often serve as red flags that a person is in crisis and may need immediate support or intervention.

### Warning signs may include:

- Talking or writing about suicide. For example, making statements such as "I'm going to kill myself," or "I won't be a problem for you much longer"
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Feeling trapped, hopeless or helpless about a situation
- Doing risky or self-destructive things
- Giving away personal items for no clear, logical reason

### Other warning signs might seem like typical youth behavior:

- Changing normal routine, like eating or sleeping patterns
- Becoming less social and wanting to be alone
- Having mood swings

## Taking action

Remember, if you notice the warning signs in someone you know, it's important to reach out with compassion, listen without judgment, and encourage them to seek professional help. ***If you're worried that a young person may harm themselves or someone else right now, call 911.*** Otherwise, you can follow these four simple steps:

- 1. Ask:** Ask directly if they are thinking about suicide.
- 2. Listen:** Show empathy, listen actively, and avoid judgment.
- 3. Respond:** Encourage them to seek help and connect them with resources.
- 4. Follow up:** Connect with the person within 24-48 hours after a crisis.

Every young life holds value, and each one of us has the power to make a difference. Recognizing the signs of distress and taking action—whether through a conversation, a referral to support services, or simply showing up with compassion—can be lifesaving. Preventing youth suicide starts with awareness and continues with courage, connection, and care.

