

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawn or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extremely mood swings

Additional Warning Signs of Suicide...

- Preoccupation with death
- Suddenly happier, calmer
- Loss of interest in things one cares about
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order
- Giving things away, such as prized possessions

IF YOU HAVE AN URGENT NEED TO REACH A COUNSELOR, PLEASE CALL (202) 994-5300 (24/7). SELECT OPTION 3 IF IT IS AFTER HOURS. YOU CAN ALSO CALL CRISIS LINK AT (703) 527-4077/(800) SUICIDE/(800) 273-TALK OR VISIT THE CLOSEST HOSPITAL OR GW HOSPITAL @ 900 23RD STREET NW (FOGGY BOTTOM METRO)

SUICIDE

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk factors are often confused with warning signs of suicide, and frequently suicide prevention materials mix the two lists of “what to watch out for.” It is important to note, however, that factors identified as increasing risk are *not* factors that cause or predict a suicide attempt. Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that an individual will consider, attempt, or die by suicide. Protective factors are characteristics that make it less likely that individuals will consider, attempt, or die by suicide.

Risk Factors for Suicide:

- Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and certain personality disorders
- Alcohol and other substance use disorders
- Hopelessness
- Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
- History of trauma or abuse
- Major physical illness
- Previous suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide
- Job or financial loss
- Loss of relationship
- Easy access to lethal means
- Local clusters of suicide
- Lack of social support and sense of isolation
- Stigma associated with asking for help
- Lack of health care, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Cultural and religious beliefs, such as the belief that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma
- Exposure to others who have died by suicide (in real life or via the media and Internet)

Protective Factors for Suicide:

- Effective clinical care for mental, physical and substance abuse disorders
- Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions
- Restricted access to highly lethal means of suicide
- Strong connections to family and community support
- Support through ongoing medical and mental health care relationships
- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution and handling problems in a non-violent way
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation

Adapted from “Understanding Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide” and “Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide” by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center



Colonial
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MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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