

Suicide Prevention



Suicide is the eleventh most common cause of death in the United States. People may consider suicide when they feel hopeless and can't see any other solution to their problems. Often it is related to serious depression, alcohol or substance abuse, recent loss or a stressful life situation.

An important thing to remember about suicide is that it is an undoable action to a temporary problem. Issues underlying suicidal thoughts, such as depression or substance abuse, can be treated successfully. And stressful life events can be helped through a supportive network and or counseling.

Suicide occurs across ethnic, economic, social and age boundaries, but some groups are at higher risk than others. Men are about 4 times more likely than women to die from suicide. However, 3 times more women than men report attempting suicide. In addition, suicide rates are high among middle aged and older adults.

A suicidal person may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted. Most people who commit suicide don't want to die; they are just unable to see alternatives to their problems. Definite warning signals of suicidal intentions are often present but family, friends and coworkers may be unaware of the significance of these warnings or unsure what to do about them. Warning signs may include the following:

- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol and/or substance abuse
- History of past suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide or violence
- Isolation or lack of social support
- Financial or social loss
- Access to lethal means
- Hopelessness
- Rage, uncontrollable anger, seeking revenge
- Feeling trapped – like there is no way out
- Withdrawing from friends, family and society
- Feeling alone
- Chronic physical illness
- Preoccupation with death and dying

(Note: having one or more of the above risk factors does not mean that suicide will occur.)

What to do if you suspect someone may be contemplating suicide

Being aware of the warning signs of suicidal ideation is the first step to prevention. It is also important to recognize that raising the issue and talking about suicide will not cause someone to become suicidal. If you suspect someone is contemplating suicide, you should:

- Listen and allow the expression of feelings
- Offer empathy
- Be non-judgmental
- Discuss your concerns directly and honestly
- Express that you genuinely care what happens to this person
- Show calm confidence
- Provide crisis intervention contact information

Seek Assistance

The Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program (JHSAP) provides support to students in dealing with personal, academic and relationship problems. If you are personally feeling distressed or are having thoughts of suicide, or are concerned that a friend or loved one may be considering suicide, help is available. Contact JHSAP at 443-287-7000 or visit our website for more information: www.jhsap.org.