How You Can Play a Role in Preventing Suicide

2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: How You Can Play a Role in Preventing Suicide

The effects of suicide are not limited to those who die. Suicide is a serious public health problem that has shattered the lives of millions of people, families, and communities nationwide. We can all take action to reduce its toll. A variety of strategies are available for individuals and organizations across the United States to help prevent suicide.

FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE

- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, claiming more than twice as many lives each year as homicides. i
- On average, more than 33,000 Americans died each year between 2001 and 2009 as a result of suicide—more than 1 person every 15 minutes. ii
- More than 8 million adults reported having serious suicidal thoughts in the past year, 2.5 million people reported making a suicide plan in the past year, and 1.1 million reported a suicide attempt in the past year. iii
- Nearly 16 percent of students in grades 9 to 12 report having seriously considered suicide, and 7.8 percent report having attempted suicide once or more in the past 12 months. iv

Although suicide can affect anyone, the following populations are known to have an increased risk for suicidal behaviors:

- Individuals with mental and/or substance use disorders;
- Individuals bereaved by suicide;
- Individuals in justice and child welfare settings;
- Individuals who engage in nonsuicidal self-injury;
- Individuals who have attempted suicide;
- Individuals with medical conditions;
- Individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT);
- American Indians/Alaska Natives;
- Members of the Armed Forces and veterans;
- Men in midlife; and
- Older men.
WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIORS

Everyone can play a role in preventing suicide by being aware of the warning signs of suicidal behaviors:

- Talking about wanting to die; feeling hopeless, trapped, or in unbearable pain; being a burden to others;
- Looking for a way to kill oneself;
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs;
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless;
- Sleeping too little or too much;
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated;
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge; and
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you believe someone is at risk of suicide:

- Ask them if they are thinking about killing themselves. (This will not put the idea into their heads, or make it more likely that they will attempt suicide.);
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255);
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional;
- Remove any objects that could be used in a suicide attempt; and
- If possible, do not leave the person alone.

RESOURCES

For additional information about the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, visit:

- [http://www.samhsa.gov/nssp](http://www.samhsa.gov/nssp)
- [http://www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/NSSP](http://www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org/NSSP)
- [http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- [http://www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

