

Suicide Awareness

Every year millions of people worldwide commit suicide and millions more attempt it. Suicide occurs throughout the lifespan and is the second leading cause of death among 15-29 year olds globally, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Recent data have shown that the stress and isolation resulting from the pandemic have pushed those numbers higher.

There are steps you can take to understand the warning signs for suicide and how to help anyone who may be contemplating it. The best advice: Get involved, be prepared for an emergency and know about the professional support resources to which you can turn.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, get help immediately by calling your local emergency number.

Why Someone Would Consider Suicide

Research shows that many people who contemplate suicide suffer from depression, a clinical illness that can be treated successfully but often is ignored. A person who contemplates suicide often believes that there is no other way out. He or she may consider suicide for many reasons, including feelings that he or she:

- Is misunderstood and ignored by others
- Is rejected by family, friends and society
- Is isolated and alone
- Is depressed about a recent trauma such as illness, divorce or death of a loved one
- Has a serious chronic illness or is in chronic pain

Warning Signs

If someone you know exhibits any of the following warning signals, take the possibility of suicide seriously. Be prepared to talk to the person about what you have observed, and seek emergency help immediately if you think suicide is imminent:

- Talking about suicide and death
- Symptoms of depression
- Sleeping and eating disturbances
- Drastic changes in behavior
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Difficulties at work or school
- Neglect of appearance
- Self-mutilation
- Drug or alcohol abuse

What You Can Do

Talk to the person. If you suspect that a friend or family member may attempt suicide or if the person broaches the subject with you in person or on the phone, do not be afraid to discuss the matter.

Be open about the subject. Be direct. Remember that no topic is taboo when someone is serious about suicide.

Listen sensitively. Let the person talk it out with you. Avoid interrupting him or her. Refrain from being judgmental. Do not lecture about whether suicide is right or wrong.

Do not challenge the person. Do not try to dare him or her to do it or shock the person out of the idea of suicide. Concentrate on listening, understanding and getting help.

Let the person know you care. Demonstrate that you are trying to understand and that you are concerned and encourage them to seek help through the Employee Assistance Program.

Take immediate action in a crisis. If the person expresses an imminent desire to kill himself or herself or if he or she has the means available, call your local emergency number immediately. Offer to accompany the person to the nearest emergency room if it is safe to do so.

If there is any risk to your own safety, call the police. Their intent will be to help, not to arrest your friend. Be sure to notify the police if any weapons may be involved.

Resources

World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.