

SUICIDE AND DEPRESSION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

When people face serious problems or emotional pain, they sometimes turn to thoughts of suicide. If you or someone you know is thinking or talking about suicide, take it seriously. Read below to find out how you can help yourself or a friend.

When a person has thoughts of suicide ...

- ✓ It may be hard to see other options. But no matter how overwhelming problems seem, you can get help.
- ✓ With help, you can find solutions to problems that seem hopeless. If you are depressed, treatment can help relieve sadness, anger and pain.
- ✓ Having suicidal thoughts is not something to be ashamed of. It is something to get help for.



Depression can be treated.

- ✓ Everyone feels sad or down sometimes. But if you or a loved one has overwhelming feelings of despair that last for more than two weeks, depression may be the cause.
- ✓ Some symptoms include:
 - Changes in appetite and weight.
 - Sleeping too much or not at all.
 - Not being able to enjoy things that used to be fun.
 - Forgetfulness and not being able to concentrate.
 - Feeling worthless and hopeless.
 - Feeling overwhelmed by life.
- ✓ Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses in the U.S., and the most treatable. Talk to a doctor or counselor about help.



Sometimes life events can trigger suicidal feelings.

- ✓ Some of the things that can trigger suicidal feelings include:
 - Getting into trouble at school or with the police.
 - Fighting or breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
 - Having a friend or family member die, especially if this person committed suicide.
 - Being in a family that is going through a divorce or where parents argue a lot.
 - Being in a family where there is physical, sexual or emotional abuse.



Using alcohol or other drugs can make you feel worse.

- ✓ Studies show that alcohol and other drugs are a major factor in attempted suicides.
- ✓ If you're going through a hard time, alcohol and other drugs will not help and may make things worse.

Friends can make a difference.

- ✓ If you think a friend is suicidal, take it seriously. Here are things you can do to help:
 - Let him or her know you care.
 - Talk about your feelings and listen to your friend's feelings.
 - Be non-judgmental. Don't act shocked.
 - Ask, "Are you thinking about suicide? Have you made a plan?"
 - Encourage your friend to seek help. Say things like, "I know where we can get some help. Let's call the crisis line now."
- ✓ If your friend has a suicide plan, do not leave him or her alone. Get help from crisis intervention professionals. Remove guns or stockpiled pills.
- ✓ Alert important people in your friend's life - family, friends, a teacher. Do so even if your friend asks you not to tell anyone. You may be saving a life.

Look for warning signs.

- ✓ Most people who are suicidal give warning signs. Those signs include:
 - Talking about suicide or making a plan.
 - Obsessing about death.
 - Writing poems, essays or drawings that refer to death.
 - Sleeping or eating too much or too little.
 - Giving away treasured belongings.
 - Withdrawing from friends and activities.
 - Losing interest in personal appearance.
 - Showing extreme changes in behavior or personality.
 - Taking unnecessary risks.
 - Increased drug or alcohol use.

If you feel suicidal, get help.

- ✓ These feelings may not go away without help. Here's what you can do:
 - Talk to a friend, family member, counselor or religious leader.
 - Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), a 24-hour suicide prevention lifeline.
 - Look in the phone book for your local community mental health center or suicide hotline.
 - Visit your family doctor. He or she can recommend counseling or medications.

