

Suicide Prevention 101

Suicide is a desperate act or attempt to escape problems and distressing feelings. It is also often a cry for help. While the causes of suicide vary, suicide IS a preventable public health concern. Knowing the signs of suicide and how to get help, gives us the opportunity to save the lives of others. If a family member or friend is thinking about suicide, use this as a guide for seeking help.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Looking for means to kill self:

Individual seeks access to lethal means such as guns, pills, knives or other objects to make an attempt.

Talking about suicide: Any talk about suicide, death, dying or self-harm such as “I wish I was not here,” or “I’d be better off dead.”

Talking about no hope for the future: Feelings of helpless, hopelessness, and feeling trapped, or the belief that things will not change or improve.

Talking about getting affairs in order: Giving away prized possessions, making arrangements for family members.

Withdrawal from others: Friends, family, increasing social isolation from previous activities.

Self-loathing: Feelings of worthlessness, shame, self-hatred or feeling like a burden.

Self-destructive behaviors: Increased use of alcohol or drugs, reckless driving, or taking unnecessary risks as if the person has a “death wish.”

Sudden sense of calm: Sudden happiness or calmness following a period of severe depression may mean the individual has made a decision to move forward with a suicide attempt.

Prevention Tip #1: Say Something If You Are Worried

If you notice the warning signs of suicide in a family member or friend, you may ask yourself, should I say something? Although talking about suicide can be difficult and uncomfortable, having the conversation is one of the best preventative measures you can take. Talking about suicide will not push the person over the edge. By giving the person an opportunity to express pent-up feelings and emotions, he or she may decide to seek help. It is also important to ask the question directly. For example, “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”

How to start a conversation:

- > “I have been concerned about you because...”
- > “You haven’t seemed like yourself lately. I am here if you need to talk.”
- > “I notice some differences in you. How are you doing?”

Questions you might ask:

- > “How can I support your right now?”
- > “Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?”
- > “Have you thought about reaching out for help?”

Additional ways to offer support:

- > You are not alone in this.
- > I care about you and want to help.
- > I know this may be hard to believe right now, but the way you are feeling will change.

Prevention Tip #2: Respond Quickly During Times of Crisis



If a loved one admits that he or she is thinking about suicide, evaluating the level of immediate risk is another important part of prevention. Persons who are at the highest risk, can verbalize a *plan*, have access to *means* (guns, pills, etc), set a *time* for following through with their plan, and have *intentions* to commit suicide.

If a suicide attempt seems imminent, DO NOT leave the individual alone. If you can't stay, make arrangements for someone else to be with this person until he or she is safe. Next take the person to the nearest emergency room, call 911, call your local crisis hotline or The National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Prevention Tip #3: Offer Help, Resources and Support

Offering empathy and a listening ear can also help a family member or friend who is suicidal. Let the individual know you care and they are not alone. But also remember, it is not your responsibility to heal your loved one. It is up to that individual to seek further assistance.

You can however offer support by calling a crisis line and asking for referrals.

You can encourage them to seek assistance through a mental health professional such as the counselors available at the UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center.

You can also offer support over the long haul by staying in touch and checking in on them after the fact.



► uab.edu/uabcares

LOCAL EMERGENCY RESOURCES:

- > Dial 911
- > Birmingham Crisis Center: 205-323-7777
- > National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- > Crisis Text Line: Text 'UAB' to 741-741
- > UAB Police Department: 205-934-3535
- > UAB Emergency Department: 1802 6th Ave South
- > Highlands Emergency Department: 1201 11th Avenue South