

Suicide Warning Signs

Clues that an individual needs help or might at-risk for suicide include:

Depression: Expressions of sadness, emptiness, worthlessness, or guilt. Loss of appetite, energy, and interests in previously pleasurable events or actions.

Anxiety: Unwarranted or inappropriate stress, fear, or agitation marked by racing heart beat, rapid breathing, muscle tension and hypervigilance.

Personality changes: Sudden happiness following depression.

Preoccupation with death: Talking, writing, drawing about death. Making final arrangements like writing a will or giving away possessions.

Suicide threats, notes, or gestures are escalating signals that an individual needs and wants help:

Suicide threats, whether direct like “I want to kill myself” or indirect like “I wish tomorrow would just not come” must be taken seriously. A suicide note reveals more planning and clearer intent to disclose their plan. A suicide gesture is the most intense, non fatal signal an individual can use to say “help me now.”

Suicide Awareness

Suicide is the **third** leading cause of death among 10-24 year olds.¹

In 2009, a total of **4630** 10-24 year olds died by suicide.²

For every completed suicide there are **100-200** attempts.³

17.4% of students reported **thoughts of suicide**.⁴

13.2% of students **made a plan**.⁵

8.1% **attempted** suicide.⁶

2.3% required **medical attention** due to attempted suicide.⁷

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012)
TeenScreen (2012)

Why do people
commit
SUICIDE?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). *Leading causes of death*. WISQARS Data & Statistics Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading_causes_death.html

Pfeffer, C. R. (2001). Youth suicide: Prevention through risk management. *Clinical Neuroscience Research*, 1, 362-365.

TeenScreen (2012). *Youth suicide and prevention*. Retrieved from <http://www.teenscreen.org/wp-content/uploads/14-Youth-Suicide-and-Prevention-2152012.pdf>

Welch, M. D., Jones, K. M., Wickstrom, K. F., & Crosby, M. (2012). *Suicide prevention and response in K-12 school populations* (Report No. 703625-D9-2). Report provided to Louisiana Department of Education.

Suicide Is Preventable

Here's what you can do...

Suicide is not predictable⁸, but it is preventable. Suicides may occur when individual risk factors, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, impulse control problems, and access to firearms interact with environmental stressors such as interpersonal conflict, loss of relationships, physical or emotional abuse, or humiliation. An individual may become hopeless and decide to end their pain by killing themselves. In the absence of adequate protective factors like personal connectedness, safe environments, support programs, education, and limited access to lethal means individuals may act on their plans.

You may have noticed that the careful and connected observer might often detect the risk and protective factors listed above. In fact, the reason we tend to falsely believe that we can predict suicide is that, in hindsight, there are so many observable clues.

Therefore, the key to preventing suicide is to detect the clues, the patterns of behavior that might lead to suicide, and interrupt the interaction of risks and stressors by introducing more protections like friendship, support, and hope.

If you know a person who is leaving clues, even subtle clues, take action. **You could save a life!**



Teachers

- Know the warning signs
- Take **all** warnings seriously
- Protect the student (supervise)
- Notify school administrators



Parents

- Know the warning signs
- Know your child's feelings
- Don't criticize, judge, or downplay
- Secure guns
- Seek professional help



Friends

- Know the warning signs
- Listen to feelings, watch behaviors
- Do not keep secrets, **tell someone**

