

## SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION

While there is no single cause for suicide, there are risk factors and warning signs which may increase likelihood of an attempt. Learning them along with protective factors can save lives.

### Risk Factors:

Characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life.

#### Health

- Mental health conditions
- Depression
- Substance use problems
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Conduct disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Serious physical health conditions
- Traumatic brain injury
- Personality traits of aggression, mood changes and poor relationships

#### Historical

- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Childhood abuse, neglect or trauma

#### Environmental

- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Prolonged stress, such as harassment, bullying, relationship problems or unemployment
- Stressful life events, like rejection, divorce, financial crisis, other life transitions or loss
- Exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

### Protective Factors:

Characteristics or conditions that decrease the chance that a person may try to take their life.

- Access to mental health care and being proactive about mental health
- Feeling connected to family and community support
- Problem-solving and coping skills
- Limited access to lethal means
- Cultural and religious beliefs that encourage connecting and help-seeking, discourage suicidal behavior, or create a strong sense of purpose or self-esteem

## Warning Signs:

Something to look out for when concerned that a person may be suicidal is a change in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors. The concern is the sharpest if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss, or change. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.

### Mood

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation/Shame
- Agitation/Anger
- Relief/Sudden Improvement
- Fatigue

### Talk

If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

### Behavior

Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue

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## What to do if you are concerned for yourself or someone in your life:

### If you are having thoughts of suicide:

Reaching out is the first step to safety. If you are having thoughts of suicide and are currently in a state of distress, **dial 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.**

## What to do when someone else is at risk:

If you think someone is thinking about suicide, assume you are the only one who will reach out. Here's how to talk to someone who may be struggling with their mental health.

### Have an honest conversation - it could save a life

- Talk to them in private
- Listen to their story
- Let them know you care about them and their life matters to you
- Ask directly if they are thinking about suicide, calmly and without judgement
- Show understanding and take their concerns seriously
- Encourage them to seek treatment or contact their doctor or therapist
- Avoid debating the value of life, minimizing their problems or giving advice

### If a person says they are considering suicide

- Take the person seriously
- Stay with them
- Help them remove lethal means
- Remind them their suffering is temporary
- Call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- Escort them to mental health services or an emergency room

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## How the EAP can offer support:

### EAP4YOU.com

- Access to suicide awareness and prevention materials
- Access to a Health Resource Library that contains articles, checklists, guides and toolkits to help you care for your physical, mental and emotional health

### USPS EAP Call Center - 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU) | TTY: 877-492-7341

- Access to support over the phone 24/7
- Callers will be asked questions to determine risk and ensure they are connected to appropriate resources