

How To Know When Someone Is Suicidal & How You Can Help

There is often one person who causes us concern at some time in our lives when you get the sense they may want to harm them self. Many of us have heard through the grapevine or experienced directly, of someone that we know who has had the thought to end one's own life.

The Signs

The signs for suicide go from obvious to undetectable, but most often times people give off clues that they are considering ending their own lives. Here are some common ways people reveal those intentions

1. They talk about not wanting to be here, they talk about wishing they were dead and even make seemingly light-hearted jokes about killing themselves.
2. People start giving away prized possessions.
3. People start finalizing their affairs. Not only do people start taking care of their financial affairs, they also start saying things that indicate some kind of closure. The language begins to turn into what sounds like a friend who is moving away forever. For example: A friend who is usually sarcastic stops and says, "You are a really great friend." It just does not seem to fit the rest of the picture.
4. Risk Taking- People start taking unnecessary risks to help. These can come in the form of fast driving, walking in dangerous places or making unnecessary confrontations with potentially violent people.

Risk Factors

Relationships ending – Matters of the heart are one the biggest triggers of someone ending their own life. Be on high alert when someone has gone through a breakup.

A struggle with sexual identity – The number one cause of suicide among teens is struggles with sexual identity. The struggles either come with determining what your sexuality is or knowing what your sexuality is and not knowing what to do next.

Bullying/Abuse – Many victims of physical or sexual trauma suffer from depression that leads to suicidal thoughts.

Major Disappointments – Not getting into college, getting turned down for a promotion, getting caught doing something that could end your career. Billionaire Bernie Madoff attempted suicide the night before he was arrested for securities fraud.

Being over 80 – Many people overlook people near the end of their life as people who want to end their own life. Many depressed people in this age group have lived through the challenges losing most of the friends and relatives that they have known all of their lives. There is also the loss of abilities to take care of oneself that can lead to a lowered self-esteem. Being over 80 contains two other risk factors:

Isolation & Pain

Isolation – People who are connected with friends and family and have children that need care have lower incidents of suicide than those who are isolated.

Pain – Emotional pain is an obvious risk factor for suicide that is related to depression, but often times we forget how physical pain can drain a person of their happiness.

Substance Abuse – Many substances physically alter your brain chemistry causing mood swings and depression that are unrelated to outside circumstances. Street drugs are not regulated and it is difficult to determine what their effect will have on you. Alcohol and some prescription drugs act as a depressant, which can bring your mood down. Alcohol takes your mood higher for little while and then drops below baseline. New Year's day is one of a few days in the year that has a higher rate of suicide than most.

Trauma – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is another major risk factor for depression. This risk factor is now becoming more evident as more American troops are dying by their own choice than they are in combat.

Firearms – People survive overdose, jumping off of buildings, car crashes and wrist cutting. The presence of firearms increases one's chances of harming themselves in that it is the most lethal method.

When to Intervene

The sooner you get someone help, the better their chances for survival. Many times we can detect the presence of something not being right with a friend and there are steps you can take before the "S" word is even mentioned.

If the situation involves mild depression or anxiety, then you may want to wait a day or two for the right situation talk. If you think the person is at immediate risk for harming himself or herself, then do not wait.

How to Intervene

If someone is showing signs of depression, then you might want to start with some suggestions including having your friend go with you to an event where they might meet other people.

Another approach is to refer them to [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com), which has groups of people everywhere with interests that range from hiking, board games, biking, stamp collecting, spiritual discussions to book studies.

There are a variety of men and women's groups throughout the world that provide an outlet for those who feel more comfortable sharing within their own gender.

If your concern is deeper, then you may want to start a conversation that goes something like this:

“Because I care about you, I want to talk to you about some things I have noticed in you I have been concerned about. “ List your concerns while discussing your fears and hurts about losing the person. Many depressed people do not realize the impact they have on others and often take action when they realize they may be hurting others.

When the situation is more imminent then more immediate action needs to be taken. If someone has stated they are going to kill themselves or you have caught someone who has overdosed, then you need to call emergency services right away. Other circumstances that require immediate action is when others are using such poor judgment that they could end up killing themselves. This would include a person subjecting themselves to situations that would likely cause them harm such as driving while intoxicated or someone pushing themselves despite a health condition.

If the person is cooperative assist them in calling their health/behavioral health insurance company who have mental health professionals to guide you to the appropriate next steps. If there is no insurance, then go to the nearest emergency room.

Remember, once a person is in danger of harming himself or herself there is no more confidentiality and it is time to reach out and get help.