

Suicide Prevention

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Opening

- Introductions
- Why we're here – called to love one another
- Difficult, painful topic to discuss
- Language of “commit” vs. “complete”



Risk Factors

- Depression or other mental illness
 - (90% of people who complete suicide)
- Stressful life events
- Prior suicide attempt (100x risk)
- Family history of mental illness or substance abuse
 - In nearly 50% of suicides, the individual had a positive blood alcohol level
- Family history of suicide
 - 6-8 times more at risk of suicide than general population
- Family violence
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
- Firearms in the home
 - Method used in more than 50% of suicides
- Incarceration
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others:
 - Family members
 - Peers
 - Media figures
- Changes in neurotransmitters (brain chemicals)
 - People with depression, impulsive disorders, history of suicide attempts and brains of suicide victims



Suicidal Erosion

- Suicide is not a spontaneous act but a long-term, gradual, wearing away process
- Multiple problems at the same time
- There is no one cause of suicide
- There may be a “Catalyst”
- A seemingly minor or a major issue can result in suicidal ideation or behavior



Motivations for Suicide

- Wanting to escape an intolerable situation.
- Wanting to join a deceased loved one.
- Wanting to improve one's condition.
- Wanting to gain attention.
- Wanting to manipulate the behavior of others.
- Wanting to be punished.
- Wanting to escape punishment.
- Wanting to punish the survivors.
- Wanting to get revenge.



Motivations for Suicide

- Wanting to avoid being tortured or raped.
- Wanting to control when death will occur.
- Wanting to end an unresolvable conflict.
- Wanting to be a martyr.
- Wanting to avoid being a burden to others.
- Wanting to avoid the effects of a painful, debilitating and/or degenerative disease.
- Wanting to express love.
- Responding to auditory hallucinations.
- Wanting to escape auditory or visual hallucinations.
- Acting impulsively



Myths/ Facts

- **Myth:** No one can stop a suicide
 - **Fact:** If people in a crisis get the help they need, a suicide can be prevented
- **Myth:** Confronting a person about suicide will only make them angry and increase the risk
 - **Fact:** Asking someone directly about suicidal intent lowers anxiety, opens up communication and lowers the risk of an impulsive act
- **Myth:** Only experts can prevent suicide
 - **Fact:** Suicide prevention is everyone's business and anyone can prevent the tragedy of suicide



Myths/ Facts

- **Myth:** Suicidal people keep their plans to themselves
 - **Fact:** Most suicidal people communicate their intent sometime during the week preceding their attempt
- **Myth:** Those who talk about suicide don't do it
 - **Fact:** People who talk about suicide may try or complete a suicide
- **Myth:** Once a person decide to complete suicide, there is nothing anyone can do to stop them
 - **Fact:** Suicide is the most preventable kind of death, and almost any positive action may save a life



Early Warning Signs

- Between 85 – 95 % of suicidal people given notice of their suicidal intentions.
- Look of a cluster of warning signals within a sad or negative context: recent loss, sadness, frustration, disappointment, grief, alienation, depression, loneliness, physical pain, anguish or mental illness.

Early Warning Signs

Four out of five people who complete suicide have given clear warning signs prior to the attempt. These are some of the signs that you might recognize:

- Suddenly deteriorating school performance
- Changes in school attendance
- Talking about suicide or making suicide threats
- Loss of interest in things they used to enjoy doing
- An unusual interest in death and dying
- Taking unnecessary risks
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Depression

The Jason Foundation App –
List of Warning Signs for Youth



Early Warning Signs

- The Suicidogenic Situation: Some situations are so conducive to suicidal thoughts and feelings that the situation itself constitutes an early warning sign.
 - Sudden rejection by a loved one - unwanted separation or divorce.
 - Anticipated loss of financial security.
 - Diagnosis of a terminal and/or very painful illness.
 - Great athlete with leg amputation.
 - Loss of freedom (especially, being publicly charged with an unacceptable crime, i.e. child abuse)



Symptoms of Depression

- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Inability to concentrate
- Weight gain or loss
- Anhedonia (inability to experience pleasure)
- Lethargy (no energy)
- Withdrawal & no desire to socialize
- Apathy (disinterest in everything)
- Sloppy appearance
- Crying
- Worthless feelings
- Easy discouragement
- Defeated feelings
- Low frustration tolerance
- Appears quite sad
- Suicidal ideation & behavior



Verbal Warning Signs

- “I’m going to kill myself.”
- “I’ve had it. I’m through.”
- “I wish I was dead.”
- “I’ve lived long enough.”
- “I’m calling it quits—living is useless.”
- “I hate my life. I hate everyone and everything.”
- “It was good at times, but we all must say goodbye.”
- “I just can’t go on any longer.”
- “You won’t be seeing me anymore.”
- “If I don’t see you anymore, thanks for everything.”
- “You’re going to regret how you’ve treated me.”
- “It’s too much to put up with.”
- “Nobody needs me anymore.”
- “I’m getting out. I’m tired of life.”
- “If (such & such) happens, I’ll kill myself.”
- “If (such & such) doesn’t happen, I’ll kill myself.”
- “Here, take this (cherished possession), I won’t need it anymore.”



Behavioral Warning Signs

- Past suicide attempt - strongest behavioral warning sign
- Reorganization of life
- Poor adjustment to the recent loss of a loved one
- Planning own funeral shortly after the death of a loved one
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Unexplainable deviation from an ingrained pattern of behavior
- Composing a suicide note
- Giving away valued objects
- Sudden, unexplainable recovery from a profound depression – greatest risk is in the 90 days after depression begins to lift
- Suddenly buy a gun



What should you do if you suspect someone is suicidal?

- **Question:**
 - them about their suicidal feelings
 - If you don't ask, they won't tell
 - In one study only 18% spontaneously told professionals of their intentions
- **Persuade:**
 - to not harm themselves
 - to seek help
- **Refer:**
 - to a mental health professional, their supervisor, etc.
 - know your resources



Asking the Question

- If in doubt, don't wait, ask the question
- If the person is reluctant, be persistent
- Talk to the person alone in a private setting
- Allow the person to talk freely
- Give yourself plenty of time
- Know your resources
- NOTE: If you can't ask the question, find someone who can.
- Story of Matt

Asking the Question

Here are some ways to ask your friend if they are thinking about suicide.

Remember: It is not as important how you ask, but that you ask.

- I have been feeling concerned about you lately, how are you feeling?
- You have been acting strangely lately, what is going on with you?
- I'm concerned about how you are acting, how are you doing?
- Are you thinking about hurting yourself?
- Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- Do you really want to die?

The Jason Foundation App –
How to Ask



Referrals

- Get others involved.
- Ask the person who else might help.
 - Family
 - Friends
 - College staff
 - Pastors, Priest , Rabbi
 - Physician
 - Mental health counselor
- If necessary, activate emergency response



Referrals

- Suicidal people often believe they cannot be helped, so you may have to be actively involved.
 - The best referral:
 - **Take the person** directly to someone who can help
 - The next best referral:
 - Get a **commitment to accept help** and then
 - **You make the arrangements** to get that help
 - The 3rd best referral:
 - **Give referral information**

Resources

- 9-1-1
- Crisis Line – (615) 244-7444
- The Jason Foundation App
- Crisis Text Line – 741-741
- Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network - <http://tspn.org/>

a friend asks... TO GET
HELP NOW

If you or a friend need to talk with a counselor for help or for resources available in your area, press **"Call Now"** to connect to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, **anytime 24/7.**

CALL NOW
1-800-273-TALK (8255)





Resources

- Youth Villages (under 18) – (866) 791-9221
- Survivors of Suicide Support Groups
- Claire – (865) 719-2061
- Whitney – (706) 296-9103
- T.J. – (989) 388-3437

Faith Resources

- God can handle our questions, our doubts, our anger → other people have been there, in the depths of pain, before (see Psalms of Lament)
- Psalms of Communal Lament (Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 85, 90)
- Psalms of Personal Lament (Psalms 22, 77)
- Book of Job
- Matthew 27:45-54 (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)
- *Psalms of Lament* by Ann Weems
- *Dark Night of the Soul* by John of the Cross

Faith Resources

- God doesn't cause the deep pain that people who are experiencing depression and suicidal thoughts feel. God is with us and will never forsake us
- God's tears are the first tears when God's children are hurting.
- Psalms of Hope (Psalms 23, 25, 30, 33, 139)
- Romans 8: 31-39 (nothing can separate us from God's love)

References

- Family & Children's Service Crisis Line: <https://www.fcsnashville.org/programs-and-services/crisis-information/>
- The Jason Foundation: <http://jasonfoundation.com/>
- Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network: <http://tspn.org/>