

# SUICIDE

LET'S TALK ABOUT...

...UNDERSTANDING AND HELPING THE SUICIDAL PERSON

## WAYS TO BE HELPFUL TO SOMEONE WHO IS THREATENING SUICIDE

- Be aware. Learn the warning signs.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Ask if he/she is thinking about suicide.
- Be direct. Talk openly and freely about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow for expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Don't dare him/her to do it.
- Don't tell them to behave differently.
- Don't ask "why." This encourages defensiveness.
- Offer empathy, not sympathy.
- Don't act shocked. This creates distance.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available, do not offer glib reassurance; it only proves you don't understand.
- Take action! Remove means! Get help from individuals or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

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***Suicide is preventable. Most suicidal individuals desperately want to live; they are just unable to see alternatives to their problems.***

- Most suicidal individuals give definite warnings of their suicidal intentions, but many people are either unaware of the significance of these warnings or do not know how to respond to them.
- Talking about suicide does not cause someone to be suicidal.
- Approximately 29,000 Americans killed themselves last year. The number of suicide attempts is much greater and often results in serious injury.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15-24, and it is the eighth leading cause of death among all persons.
- Youth (15-24) suicide rates increased more than 200% from the 1950's to the late 1970's. Following the late 1970's, the rates for youth suicide have remained relatively stable. Since 1995, these rates have been declining slightly.
- The suicide rate is higher among the elderly (over 65) than any other age group.
- Four times as many men kill themselves as compared to women (these ratios are even higher among the young), yet three to four times as many women attempt suicide as compared to men.
- Suicide cuts across all age, economic, social, and ethnic boundaries.
- Firearms are currently the most utilized method of completed suicide by essentially all groups (male, female, young, old, white, and non-white) and account for almost 60% of all suicides.
- Surviving family members not only suffer the trauma of losing a loved one to suicide, but also are themselves at higher risk for suicide and emotional problems.