

## Suicide and Depression

### The Problem of Suicide

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for all Americans, the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds.<sup>1</sup> Suicide does not discriminate. No one is immune.

These statistics demonstrate the seriousness of suicide, which is often linked to untreated depression. Clinical depression affects 20.9 million adults every year, and 60% of people who complete suicide have had a mood disorder. Younger people who complete suicide often have a substance abuse disorder in addition to being depressed.<sup>2</sup>

Although women suffer from clinical depression and attempt suicide more often than men, men are more likely to complete the act. Any talk of suicide by a friend or loved one should be taken seriously and help should be sought immediately.

### Symptoms

Depression and thoughts of suicide can impact a person's life in many different ways. Not everyone experiences depression and suicidal tendencies in the same way. Some people may have behavioral changes, while others experience physical changes.

Depression and suicide have many common warning signs including:

- Sadness or anxiety
- Feelings of guilt, helplessness or hopelessness
- Trouble eating or sleeping
- Withdrawing from friends and/or social activities
- Loss of interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Anger

Specific signs of potential suicide include:

- Talking openly about committing suicide
- Talking indirectly about "wanting out" or "ending it all"
- Taking unnecessary or life-threatening risks
- Giving away personal possessions

Depression alone or in combination with aggressive behavior, substance abuse and/or anxiety is found in over half of all suicides. If depression is present, substance abuse, anxiety, impulsivity, rage, hopelessness and desperation may increase the risks of suicide.

Suicide can be also triggered by a number of things including:

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute for Health, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention/suicidefaq.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> American Association of Suicidology <http://www.suicidology.org/associations/1045/files/Youth2004.pdf>

# What You Need to Know...



- Stressful events, such as a failed exam or failure to get a job
- Crisis in significant social or family relationships
- Interpersonal losses
- Changes in body chemistry
- High levels of anger or anxiety

## **Finding Hope and Help:**

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#### **How to Help a friend**

If you notice any of the warning signs in a friend or loved one, you have reason to be concerned. There are ways that you can be helpful to a friend or loved one who is thinking of taking their own life.

- Be honest and express your concerns. For example, "You seem really down lately; is something bothering you?"
- Ask directly about thoughts of suicide. For example, "Have you thought of hurting yourself?" If suicidal thoughts are expressed it is important to contact a mental health professional.
- Listen and offer emotional support, understanding and patience.
- Convey the message that depression is real, common and treatable. Suicidal feelings are real and preventable.
- Offer to accompany your friend to see a counselor.

### **Resources**

Mental Health America of Wisconsin

414-276-3122 or 877-642-4630 (toll-free) or [www.mhawisconsin.org](http://www.mhawisconsin.org)

National Alliance on Mental Illness Wisconsin

608-268-6000 or 800-236-2988 (toll-free) or [www.namiwisconsin.org](http://www.namiwisconsin.org)

Mental Health America

1-800-989-6642 or [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

National Institute of Mental Health

1-800-421-4211 or [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

1-888-333-2377 or [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

American Association for Suicidology

202-237-2280 or [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)

[www.mhawisconsin.org](http://www.mhawisconsin.org)