

Suicide: Facts and Warning Signs

Did you know?

- In the United States, it is estimated that someone dies by suicide every 16 minutes and that someone makes a suicide attempt every minute.
- It is estimated that suicide attempts are 25 times the number of completed suicides.
- In Wisconsin, 668 people died by suicide in Wisconsin in 2006; that same year there were 194 deaths by homicide.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Wisconsin youth age 10-24 and the fourth leading cause of death among people age 25-64.
- In Wisconsin, 25-44 year olds have the highest rate of suicide, followed by 45-64 year olds.
- While American Indians have the highest rate of suicide in Wisconsin, followed by Whites, the completed suicide rates for Blacks, Asians and Hispanics in the state increased significantly during 2004-2006. Suicide knows no racial or cultural boundaries!
- In Wisconsin 25-44 year olds have the highest rate of suicide, followed by 45-64 year olds.
- Men complete suicide four times more often than women; however, at least twice as many women than men attempt suicide.

Why do people die by suicide?

Regardless of age, race, social, or financial status, 60-90% of suicides are associated with a mental health or substance abuse disorder. The most common link to completed suicide is untreated depression. Depressive illnesses can distort thinking, so people can't reason clearly or rationally. Most people who are suicidal do not want to die; they want the pain to end. They may not know they have a treatable illness or they may think they can't be helped.

Risk Factors

- Previous suicide attempts (by self or others close to them)
- Recent losses (physical, financial, personal)
- Access to lethal means (firearms/poison/medication)
- Untreated mental illness / substance abuse

Warning Signs

- Talking about suicide and/or death.
- Change in behavior, such as increased use of alcohol/drugs, recklessness or impulsivity, or withdrawing from family, friends or social supports.
- Change in sleeping/eating habits.
- Loss of interest in school, work or hobbies.
- Expressions of hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness, anxiety, agitation, anger, rage, or feeling trapped.
- Sudden mood changes, including dramatic positive changes.
- Making final arrangements, such as giving away special possessions or unusual contact with personally significant people
- Lack of interest in the future

What You Need to Know...



Know What to Do

- If the person is in immediate danger, call 911 or take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room; they must see a doctor or psychiatrist immediately.
- Always take thoughts or plans of suicide seriously. This is not attention-seeking behavior.
- Do not leave the person alone.
- Ask the person if they are thinking about suicide. Asking will not plant the idea in someone's head.
- Ask the person if they have a plan, a weapon or some type of dangerous object.
- Listen and talk openly.
- Allow the person to express their feelings.
- Show interest, support and undivided attention.
- Don't act shocked or minimize the problems – this can create distance.
- Don't ask "why" – this may encourage defensiveness.
- Be non-judgmental and do not debate if suicide is right or wrong.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy.
- Seek support. Don't try to handle it alone. If the person is not in immediate danger, do your best to help the person find a doctor or a mental health professional.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call

- 911
- 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
- Local Crisis Contacts

For more information, contact MHA at (414) 276-3122 or visit our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org.

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