

KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR

learn the signs



While there is no single cause for suicide, there are some common characteristics to be aware of. **The majority of people who attempt suicide do something or say something to let others know, before they act.**

Learning the warning signs, risk and protective factors for suicide can help you recognize if you or someone you care about needs support.

WHAT ARE WARNING SIGNS?

Behaviors, affects and actions that indicate a someone might be considering suicide. The key is to focus on changes in a person's usual behavior (especially when these changes are connected to a distressing event, a significant loss, or a major life change.)

TALK

- Talking, writing or posting about wanting to die
- Mentioning a plan or talking about ways they could die by suicide
- A preoccupation with death or suicide
- Expressing they feel trapped, in unmanageable pain, or a burden to others
- Statements like: 'I wish I was dead,' 'No one will miss me when I'm gone' or 'I wish I could just disappear.'

FEELINGS

- Hopeless, feeling they have no reason to live
- Experiencing deep despair and sadness, feeling trapped
- Increased anxiety
- Shame, humiliation
- Agitated, experiencing rage
- Extreme changes in mood
- Unbearable emotional or physical pain
- Loss of interest
- Relief, sudden improvement

BEHAVIOR

- Making preparations, looking for ways
- to die by suicide
- Withdrawing or isolating
- Changes in eating and sleeping and patterns, hygiene/ appearance
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Increased alcohol and/ or substance use
- A sudden worsening at school/ job/ home, etc.
- Increased impulsive reckless, and/or risk-taking behavior



Warning signs are like the sudden flashing of your car's "check engine" light on the dashboard. They indicate there may be an urgent situation and signal the potential for danger that needs to be addressed right away.

WHAT ARE RISK FACTORS?

Characteristics related to a person's health, history and environment that increase the potential for suicide. The presence and severity of risk factors differs from person to person over their lifetime.

HEALTH

- Mental health conditions (particularly depression and other mood disorders)
- Serious physical or chronic condition, prolonged physical pain
- Terminal illness

HISTORY

- Previous suicide attempt
- Alcohol and/ or substance abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Family history of mental health conditions
- Trauma, physical/ sexual abuse and/ or neglect
- Historical trauma
- Discrimination

ENVIRONMENT

- Social isolation
- Easy access to lethal means (especially guns)
- Loss of a significant relationship (death, divorce, break-up, etc.)
- High conflict or violent relationships
- Loss of job, income, unemployment, benefits
- Criminal/legal problems
- Prolonged bullying, harassment or victimization
- Limited access to health & mental health care
- Cultural/religious beliefs that encourage suicide
- Exposure to suicide (including (including a known person and through the media/ social media)
- Stigma



Risk Factors are the road signs urging caution such as a "sharp curves ahead" .They alert you to conditions that increase the likelihood of an accident if not heeded, especially when coupled with other hazards.

WHAT ARE PROTECTIVE FACTORS?

Behaviors, skills, environments or relationships that reduce the likelihood of suicide and enhance resilience. Protective factors help to counterbalance risk factors.

- Supportive and caring family and friends
- Reduced access to lethal means and enhanced lethal means safety
- Connection to a community, school, work or supportive organization
- Learned coping skills and behaviors
- Access to medical and mental health care
- Access to immediate and ongoing support
- Cultural and/or religious beliefs that discourage suicide



Protective factors are like the safety features in your car - seatbelts, airbags, and anti-lock brakes. While they don't remove the potential dangers or prevent hazardous conditions. They provide an additional layer of safety, buffering the impact should an accident occur.