Suicide Prevention Initiative

Suicide is Preventable

Behavioral Health and Recovery Services
Building a Suicide Safer Community
What is Suicide?

Suicide is the conscious and deliberate act of killing oneself.
More than 40,000 people in the U.S. and 1,000,000 people worldwide take their own lives each year.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death in young people between the ages of 15 and 24.
What are the Warning Signs of Suicide?

• Talking about wanting to die or suicide
• Looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun
• Feeling hopeless, desperate, trapped
• Giving away possessions
• Putting affairs in order
• Reckless behavior
• Uncontrolled Anger

Pain Isn’t Always Obvious

KNOW THE SIGNS
Suicide Is Preventable
Warning Signs of Suicide Continued...

- Increased drug or alcohol use
- Withdrawal
- Anxiety or agitation
- Changes in sleep
- Sudden mood changes
- No sense of purpose
What are some risk factors for suicide?

Other risk factors include:
- Living in isolation
- Financial crisis
- Trauma/Childhood Trauma
- High Risk Populations
  - LGBTQ+ Youth and Adults
  - Veterans and members of the military
  - American Indians and Alaska Natives
- People who intentionally hurt themselves
Understanding the Facts about Suicide

MYTH 1: Only certain types of people become suicidal.

FACT 1: Everyone has the potential for suicide. Suicides occur in every ethnic group, gender, occupation, geographic area and socioeconomic status.

MYTH 2: Most suicidal people never discuss their problems with others.

FACT 2: Evidence shows that individuals thinking about suicide often tell others of their thoughts and plans. 80% of people who complete suicide told at least one other person that they were thinking about it.
MYTH 3: Talking about suicide or asking someone if they feel suicidal will encourage suicide attempts.

FACT 3: Talking about suicide does not cause suicide to occur. In fact, it can be a good way to help prevent suicide. Asking someone “Are you thinking of suicide?” directly will give the person the opportunity and permission to talk about suicide. People who are not suicidal reject the idea, while people who may be thinking about it usually welcome the chance to talk about it. However, talking about suicide should be carefully managed.

MYTH 4: If a friend tells you they are thinking of suicide and asks you to keep it a secret you should agree.

FACT 4: Do not keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Seek help from a trusted adult. An angry friend is better than a dead friend.
MYTH 5: Once a person is intent on suicide, there is no way of stopping them.

FACT 5: Suicides can be prevented. People can be helped. Suicidal crises can be relatively short-lived. Suicide is a permanent solution to what is usually a temporary problem. There is help available and it is important to intervene. Tell somebody and get help for the individual. A trained professional will be able to help the individual.

MYTH 6: When a suicidal person’s depression improves and spirits lift, he or she is out of danger.

FACT 6: The opposite may be true. In the three months following an attempt, a young person is at most risk of completing suicide. The apparent lifting of the problems could mean the person has made a firm decision to complete suicide and feels better because of this decision.
MYTH 7: Troubled teenagers who drink or use drugs as an escape are less likely to complete suicide to escape from their problems.

FACT 7: Drugs and alcohol decrease a person’s inhibitions and increase a person’s impulsivity, increasing a person’s risk of suicide.

MYTH 8: Once a young person is suicidal, they will be suicidal forever.

FACT 8: Most young people who are considering suicide will only be that way for a limited period of their lives. Given proper assistance and support, they will have the chance to recover and continue to lead meaningful and happy lives unhindered by suicidal concerns.
Preventing Suicide: How to Help Yourself

Step #1: Promise not to do anything right now
• Give yourself some distance between thoughts and action

Step #2: Avoid drugs and alcohol
• Drugs or alcohol can increase feelings of hopelessness

Step #3: Make your home/environment safe
• Remove things you could use to hurt yourself or go to a safe place
Step #4: Reach out to others
• Don’t keep suicidal feelings to yourself
• Talk to family, friends, a doctor or a help line

Step #5: Take care of yourself
• Create a list of actions that help you cope, like meditation, exercise, journaling, getting together with friends
• Take these actions to help yourself feel better
• Work with a doctor or a counselor on a treatment plan
• Build protective factors to keep yourself safe

Step #6: Remember that you are not alone and help is available
Preventing Suicide: How to Help Others

• Know the warning signs
• Talk openly with the person
• Show care and concern

• Take the person seriously
• Help build protective factors, including safety and inclusion for high risk individuals
• Get professional help for the individual
• In an emergency: call an ambulance and law enforcement to take the person to the hospital
Other protective factors to prevent suicide include:

- Talking to someone you trust about your thoughts and feelings and getting timely help
- Staying connected to a community
- Having a significant relationship with another person
- Participating in regular physical exercise and looking after your physical and mental health
- Safety and inclusion
- Adequate life resources (housing, employment, etc.)
- Personal skills and resilience
- Spirituality and belief systems
Protective Factors for Youth

• **The presence of an important person in the youth's life:**
The presence of an emotionally significant person in a young person’s life, to whom the youth can relate, will help decrease the likelihood of suicide. This important person may be a parent, a teacher, a close friend or a youth worker. Having a good supportive network is particularly important to those youths who have little or no family support.

• **Good coping skills:**
Being resourceful and skilled in problem solving will increase a young person’s ability to cope with stressful situations. A person who is coping well may see a stressful situation as a challenge and an opportunity for change rather than as an occasion for despair.

• **A supportive and caring family:**
A warm, caring and understanding family is a good source of support for a young person in distress. Firm guidance, good communication, family stability are important ingredients for a well functioning family.

• **Interests and activities:**
Young people who are involved in group activities such as school clubs, team sports, church groups, etc. can use these activities to channel their energy and frustration in a socially acceptable manner. They learn to relate to others in a semi-structured and fun filled environment under the guidance of responsible and caring adults. Their self esteem can be raised by their successes.

• **Safety and inclusion for LGBTQ+ youth:**
LGBTQ+ youth require all the same protective factors listed above. Because they sometimes experience lack of acceptance from family, peers, teachers or others, support from a caring adult and/or a peer support system is essential and, in some cases, life changing and life saving for LGBTQ+ youth.
If you or someone you know is considering suicide please call or text:

Central Valley Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-888-506-5991

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255

California Youth Crisis Line

Call 1-800-843-5200 or Text CONNECT to 741741

Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Access Line

1-888-334-0163

Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ+ Youth

Call 1-866-488-7386 or Text START to 678678
A semicolon is used when a sentence could have been ended but it wasn’t.

Your Story Is Not Over;
Keep Writing Your Story