

HOW TO SAVE A LIFE

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This year an estimated 5,000 young people in the U.S. will take their own life. And, studies show that for every one suicide, there are nearly 200 teens who try to die and fail. That translates into 1,000,000 kids who are experiencing serious psychological pain. But there are ways that parents, teachers and even other students can help.

KNOW THE SIGNS

Did you know that 8 out of 10 people who take their own lives give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member? Would you know what to do if you were the person who was told? Learn to recognize the warning signs of suicide:

- Uncharacteristic impulsiveness, recklessness or risk-taking
- Expressions of rage, uncontrolled anger, aggressive behavior
- Preoccupation with death, dying, or suicide through writing, talking, or artwork
- Giving away prized possessions
- Loss of interest in personal appearance
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and society
- Extreme anxiety or agitation; inability to sleep or sleeping all the time
- A recent severe stressor, such as real or anticipated loss of a relationship, unplanned pregnancy, Victim of bullying, family conflict or instability, etc.
- A previous suicide attempt or exposure to another's suicidal behavior

Verbal signs:

- "I'm so tired. I don't feel like I can take this any longer."
- "I don't want to be a bother anymore."
- "You won't be able to treat me like this/take it out on me much longer."

KNOW WHAT TO DO AND TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

Ask what is going on and how you can help. Be persistent. Be willing to listen. Allow for expression of feelings. Be non-judgmental. Don't act shocked or angry, as this creates distance.

ASK QUESTIONS

If the person is depressed, don't be afraid to ask whether he or she is considering suicide. Be direct. Ask if he has a particular plan or method in mind. Talking openly about it is the first step toward help. It may be a relief to the person to know that it's all right to talk about it openly.

ENCOURAGE

Let the person know that:

- You care and understand
- He or she is not alone
- Suicidal feelings are temporary
- Depression can be treated.

Remind him that no matter how awful his problems seem, they can be worked out, and you are willing to help.

Don't try to argue a person out of suicide. Don't say, "You have so much to live for," or, "Think of how suicide will hurt those who love you." Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support. Offer hope that alternatives are available. Keep talking.

TAKE ACTION

Remove all lethal means from immediate access, including guns, pills, kitchen utensils, and ropes.

KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP

People who think about ending their lives often don't believe they can be helped. You may be the critical link to saving a life. Take action! Get help from individuals or agencies that specialize in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Try to get your friend to agree to talk to someone—a parent, teacher, physician, counselor or adult friend. If you can't get the person to agree to this and you feel that he or she is in danger, immediately call someone who can help, such as a parent or a crisis help line. Visit www.texassuicideprevention.org for more information about statewide resources.

If the situation is life-threatening, go with the person to the nearest emergency room, walk-in clinic, or mental health treatment center. Call 1-800-TALK, or 911 and they will put you in touch with the nearest facility. If you think the person could act on thoughts of suicide, stay until you get help. **DO NOT LEAVE** the person alone until help is available.

The important thing to remember is this: Most suicides are preventable. Most people who die by suicide suffer from a serious but very treatable disorder. They just need someone to take them by the hand and lead them to help and hope.