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Warning Signs of Suicide

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Overview

Warning signs of suicide in adults include:

- Talking or writing about wanting to die or to hurt or kill themselves or someone else.
- Saying they feel hopeless, trapped, without purpose, in pain, or like they're a burden to others.
- Looking for ways to harm themselves. For example, they may buy a gun or stockpile medicines.
- Increasing their use of alcohol or drugs.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, and activities.
- Seeming angry, grumpy, anxious, or depressed.
- Eating or sleeping less or more than usual.
- Doing risky things, like driving too fast.
- Giving away their belongings.

If someone talks about suicide, self-harm, or feeling hopeless, get help right away. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). Or text HOME to 741741 to access the Crisis Text Line. Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

How can you help someone who is suicidal?

If the person has a plan to harm themselves or someone else, follow these steps:

- Call **911**, the police, or a suicide hotline like the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or text HOME to 741741 to access the Crisis Text Line. Consider saving these numbers in your phone.
- Consider your own safety. If you feel safe, stay with the person, or ask someone you trust to stay with them, until help arrives.
- Talk about the situation as openly as possible. Tell the person that you don't want them to die or to harm another person.
- Show understanding and compassion. Don't argue with the person or deny their feelings. Arguing with the person may only increase their feeling of being out of control of their life.

What puts an adult at risk for suicide?

It's hard to know if a person is thinking about suicide. But you can look for things that may make suicide more likely. These include their personal history and stressful life changes.

Personal history

People may be more likely to attempt suicide if they:

- Have attempted suicide before.
- Have a family member who has attempted suicide or who has died by suicide.
- Have a mental health problem such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or an anxiety disorder.
- Have been through family violence, including physical or sexual abuse.
- Misuse alcohol or drugs (substance use disorder).
- Are LGBTQ+. Issues like discrimination and abuse can contribute to an increased risk.
- Are lonely or don't have many social contacts.
- Are veterans or members of the armed services.
- Have access to means of suicide, such as a gun or pills.

Life changes

Life changes that may increase the risk of suicide include:

- The death of a partner or good friend.
- Stressful life changes, such as retirement, divorce, or money problems.
- Being diagnosed with a serious physical illness, such as cancer or heart disease, or a new physical disability.
- Severe and long-lasting pain.
- Loss of independence or not being able to get around without help.

Take any mention of suicide seriously. If someone talks about suicide, self-harm, or feeling hopeless, get help right away.

Credits

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