

WHAT TO DO WHEN A LOVED ONE IS SUICIDAL

Since 1999, the rate of suicide in the U.S. has increased by 25 percent. In 2016 alone, around 45,000 people died by suicide, which makes it the 10th leading cause of death in this country.

These statistics indicate that the problem is only getting worse, and it's not just a mental health problem: It's a public health one.

Symptoms

If you're worried that a loved one might be considering suicide, watch out for these red flags. Sometimes the warning signs aren't obvious, and they can vary from person to person.

- Discussing suicide and saying things such as, "I wish I were dead" or "I wish I hadn't been born."
- Purchasing a gun, pills or other means to use for the act.
- Becoming preoccupied with death, dying and violence.
- Withdrawing from friends and family.

- Engaging in risky behavior, like using drugs or driving recklessly.
- Putting affairs in order and giving away possessions.
- Becoming increasingly agitated or anxious.

Start a conversation

If you spot some of these warning signs, speak up. Talking with a loved one about this subject can be difficult, but it's important to offer your support.

Here are some ways you can start a conversation:

- "I wanted to check in with you because you haven't seemed like yourself recently."
- "I've been concerned about you lately and am wondering how you are doing."
- "Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?"
- "How can I best support you right now?"

- “You are not alone in this. I’m here for you.”

Offer help

After talking more with your loved one, try to get them the help they need. You can do this in a variety of ways.

- Make a doctor’s appointment. Help them find a facility or drive them there.
- Follow up. If your loved one goes on medication, make sure they are taking it as prescribed.
- Remove dangerous objects and substances, such as firearms, razors, knives and medications.
- Make a safety plan. Include the contact numbers for their doctor, therapist and a crisis hotline.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle that includes a well-balanced diet and exercise.

In the case of an emergency

If you believe that a loved one might attempt suicide, seek help immediately.

- Don’t leave the person alone. Stay with them while you take your next steps.
- Call 911 or another local emergency number.
- Drive them to the nearest emergency room.