

Recognizing Warning Signs of Suicide

Although there is no typical profile for a suicide victim, there are warning signs that can help determine if a person is at risk. Being able to recognize the signs of someone in trouble is a very effective way to prevent suicide. The more you are informed about suicide, the more likely you will be helpful and to respond to someone in crisis.

All of the warning signs of suicide are magnified in importance if the person is depressed. Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed. Serious depression can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often it is rather expressed as a loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities that had been enjoyable.

Depression is present if at least five or more of the following symptoms are present during a two-week period; at least one of the symptoms must be either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities.

- Depressed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Change in appetite or weight
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Speaking and/or moving with unusual speed or slowness
- Decrease in sexual drive
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach or guilt
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, slowed thinking or indecisiveness
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

Some other possible signs of suicide

- Previous gestures or attempts
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Possession of or acquiring the means to commit suicide
- Giving away personal possessions and making preparations for death
- A family member has committed suicide
- Noticeable change in behavior (e.g., avoiding friends/family, increased risk taking behavior, crying spells, irritability and angry outbursts)

Modified version of materials provided by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and permission to reproduce for educational purposes granted from www.afsp.org Brought to you by the CSUC Campus Wellness Center, Student Services Center 430, 898-4697