

# SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS AND RISK FACTORS

## VERBAL HINTS OR THREATS

### \* Direct Statements

“I’m going to kill myself”

“I don’t want to live anymore”

“I want to die”

### \* Indirect Statements

“I want to go to sleep and never wake up”

“You’ll be sorry when I’m gone”

“It will all be over soon”

## EMOTIONAL , PHYSICAL, BEHAVIORAL HINTS

1. Feelings of Hopelessness
2. Lack of planning for the future
3. Sudden and/or prolonged change in appetite
4. Prolonged change in sleep patterns (insomnia/excessive sleeping)
5. Unusual neglect of physical appearance or hygiene
6. Withdrawal and isolation from friends and family
7. Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
8. Decreased sexual activity
9. Difficulty concentrating
10. Persistent feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, or sadness
11. Preoccupation with themes of death
12. Irritability; abrupt outbursts of anger or rage; seeking revenge
13. Frequent physical complaints, often headaches, stomach ailments, fatigue/ drowsiness
14. Talking of feeling trapped
15. Increased substance use/abuse
16. Giving away treasured possessions
17. Increased risk taking (reckless driving)
18. Making final arrangements (wills), checking insurance policies

## HISTORY

- ◆ Previous suicide attempts
- ◆ Alcohol or other substance abuse
- ◆ Mental illness, particularly depressive disorder
- ◆ Poor coping skills or impulsive behavior
- ◆ Previous suicide in family

## SITUATIONAL HINTS

### \* LOSSES

Health, particularly onset of  
progressive illness

Job or financial security

Death of a loved one

Relationship, through divorce  
or separation

### \* PRESSURES

Economic (gambling debt, foreclosure)

Scholastic

Interpersonal

Parental

An impending crisis (legal case, bankruptcy)

Shame or embarrassment

## GROUPS AT SPECIAL RISK

Gay males and lesbians, especially youth

Viet Nam Veterans

Native Americans

Prisoners, especially first-time offenders

NOTE: there is no single causative factor in suicide. All hints must be taken seriously. It is important to be aware that a combination of distress signals manifested over a period of time bears watching. The presence of and willingness to use a lethal methodology is a major factor. The availability of a firearm is a key factor, especially with males.

## SUICIDE DEMOGRAPHICS

### 1. Gender:

Males complete suicide at a rate 3 to 4 times that of females

Females make 3 to 4 times more attempts than males

### 2. Age:

Adults over age 65 have a suicide rate 50% higher than the nation as a whole

Young people (ages 15-24) have the highest rates of attempts

### 3. Race:

White suicide rates are approximately twice those of non-whites

Native Americans have a documented elevated risk

### 4. Marital Status:

Suicide rates are highest among the widowed or divorced

**Suicide rates are lowest among the married**

## EMERGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT

Ask the person if they are considering suicide.

If they say yes, ask the following:

“Do you have a plan?”

“Is the means for the plan readily available?”

“Is the method a lethal one?”

“When do you plan to do this?”

If the person has imminent plans, take them to the emergency room or call 911.

Never leave them alone!

**If the person refuses help, call (231) 720-3200 for assistance.**