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National Suicide Prevention Month: Something to Talk About

What seems to transcend age, gender, socio-economic, and educational levels? Suicide, and there is no other time but now to talk about it!

Suicide is a major public health concern. Over 47,000 people died by suicide in the United States in 2017; it is the 10th leading cause of death overall. Suicide is complicated and tragic, but it is often preventable. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives.

There are steps you can do to help someone in emotional pain. National Institute of Mental Health provides the following steps to help guide you:

1. **ASK:** Asking the question “Are you thinking about suicide?” communicates that you’re open to speaking about suicide in a non-judgmental and supportive way. It’s not an easy question, but studies show you don’t give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true—bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do. Other questions you can ask include, “How do you hurt?” and “How can I help?”
2. **KEEP THEM SAFE:** Reducing a suicidal person’s access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. While this is not always easy, asking if the at-risk person has a plan and removing or disabling the lethal means can make a difference.
3. **BE THERE:** Listen carefully and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling. This could mean being physically present for someone, speaking with them on the phone when you can, or any other way that shows support for the person at risk. An important aspect of this step is to make sure you follow through with the ways in which you say you’ll be able to support the person – do not commit to anything you are not willing or able to accomplish. Being there is life-saving because it increases someone’s connectedness to others and limits isolation which is a protective factor against suicide.

4. **HELP THEM CONNECT:** Helping someone with thoughts of suicide connect with ongoing supports can help them establish a safety net for those moments they find themselves in a crisis. One way to start helping them find ways to connect is to work with them to develop a safety plan. This can include ways for them identify if they start to experience significant, severe thoughts of suicide along with what to do in those crisis moments. A safety plan can also include a list of individuals to contact when a crisis occurs.
5. **STAY CONNECTED:** Staying in touch after a crisis or after being discharged from care can make a difference. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

Save the following Resources:

Call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline \(Lifeline\)](#) at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, or text the Crisis Text Line (**text HELLO to 741741**). Both services are free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All calls are confidential.

The [Veterans Crisis Line](#) connects Service members and Veterans in crisis, as well as their family members and friends, with qualified, caring Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text messaging service. Dial 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 to talk to someone or send a text message to 838255 to connect with a VA responder. You can also start a confidential online chat session at veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat.

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