



SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide is a reaction to intense feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, hopelessness, or depression. Threats or attempts of suicide are calls for help. Knowing the warning signs and being prepared to answer these calls for help could prevent many suicides.

Why people suicide.

Problems that seem overwhelming may lead a person to think the only solution is to end his or her life. Suicide also can take place indirectly when a person's reaction to a problem leads him or her to act recklessly or ignore serious illness.

Risk factors.

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life:

- **Health:** mental health conditions, serious physical health conditions including chronic pain, and brain injury.
- **Environmental:** access to lethal means, prolonged stress (i.e. bullying), life events (i.e. divorce or loss), exposure to a suicide, and discrimination.
- **Historical:** previous suicide attempts, family history of suicide deaths, and abuse, neglect or trauma.

(ref: AFSP)

Warning signs.

Suicide is rarely a spur-of-the-moment decision. Most people give warning signs that they are thinking about taking their own life. Here are a few warning signs:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself. Looking for ways to kill yourself.
- Threats or previous attempts. People who threaten suicide must be taken seriously, even if they have no intention of carrying out the threat.
- Depression. People living with severe and prolonged depression can be at risk of suicide.
- Personality or behavioral changes. Someone who has been depressed or troubled and suddenly is better or seems to have resolved their conflicts may have decided upon suicide as a solution. Insomnia, loss of weight or appetite, rage or anger, loss of sexual drive, withdrawing from families and friends, and self-destructive behavior like misusing alcohol or drugs are also warning signs.
- Preparations for death. Someone suddenly making out a will, putting their affairs in order, giving away personal possessions, or acquiring the means of committing suicide (buying a gun, stockpiling sleeping pills, etc.), is sending out a warning sign.

How you can help.

One of the many myths of suicide is that someone who has decided to take his or her life is beyond help. In most cases, the crisis period when a person is actually considering taking his or her life is limited. There is an opportunity to help someone through this difficult period, saving a life.

Another myth is that mentioning suicide may give the person the idea. If someone is showing warning signs of being suicidal, that person has already thought about it. Talking about it can actually help prevent a person from acting on the idea.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide:

- Call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, (veterans press 1 to connect with a VA crisis specialist).
- Go to the nearest hospital emergency room.
- If the person has already started an attempt or your safety is at risk (i.e. they have a weapon), call 911 for emergency services.

For your convenience in finding behavioral health resources, the Missouri Department of Mental Health (DMH) Veterans Services has compiled this list. These links will take you out of the DMH website. DMH does not endorse or take responsibility for the content of other organizations' websites.

[Veteran Crisis Line](#)

Explains the signs of a crisis, offers a confidential self-check quiz, telephone, online and text help lines.

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, including those who have experienced a loss.

[Tragedy Assistance for Loss Survivors \(TAPS\)](#)

A national nonprofit organization providing compassionate care and comprehensive resources to all those grieving a death in the military or veteran community.

[Missouri Buddy Check 22 Day](#)

The twenty-second day of each month Missouri promotes education and awareness of suicide facing military personnel and encourages people to reach out and connect with a service members, Veteran, or family member.