

SUICIDE

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people. Approximately 5,000 individuals between the ages of 15 -24 take their own life each year. Most of those who die could have been helped.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Although no one can predict with 100% accuracy who will attempt suicide and when, the following signals may indicate a risk of suicide. Generally speaking, the more warning signs present, the greater the risk of suicidal behavior.

1. **Depression:**

- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and/or worthlessness
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Significant appetite loss or gain
- Decreased interest or pleasure in previously enjoyable activities
- Themes of death in artwork, poetry and/or conversation

2. **Previous Attempts:**

- 4 out of 5 who actually commit suicide have tried to do so at least once previously.

3. **Significant Loss:**

- Any real or perceived loss such as a relationship breakup, loss of status/prestige, death, or physical impairment.

4. **Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse:**

- If a person cannot say "No" to a drug or control the amount used, there is a substance abuse problem.

5. **Suicide Plan:**

- The more specific the plan, the more serious the intent.

6. **Giving Possessions Away:**

- Talking About Suicide: This may be stated directly--"I'm going to kill myself." Or indirectly-- "You would be better off without me," or, "Soon you won't have to worry about me anymore."

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Many students have never directly dealt with a suicidal person. When such a situation presents itself, they are likely to feel helpless and overwhelmed. The following guidelines are presented to help provide a sense of direction and facilitate the helping process:

1. **Recognize the warning signals.**

2. **Listen, Listen, Listen.** We often undervalue the power of active listening. Help them to hear themselves by rephrasing their words and feelings. For example, "In other words, you're feeling/saying..."

3. **Be supportive.** Show that you care. "I care about you." "You are important to me."

4. **Avoid being judgmental or arguing about the moral issues regarding suicide.**

5. **Take every complaint or reference to suicide seriously.**

6. **Be direct when addressing suicidal intentions.** Ask: "John, are you thinking about suicide?" If the person is suicidal, studies show that such a question can be a relief. He or she may actually welcome the chance to express painful feelings. If the person is not suicidal, you have expressed care and concern.

7. **Evaluate the immediate risk.** If the person is experiencing suicidal thoughts, check out the next three predictors of immediate risk:

- the presence of a suicide plan,
- possession of means for suicide, and
- a time schedule.

With the presence of each progressive predictor, the chances of immediate harm increase. **Specifically ask: "Do you have a plan?" "Do you have the means (pills, a knife, or something else)?" "When do you plan to kill yourself?" Never leave a person alone who has secured a means for suicide. An added note: Protect yourself. If the person is armed, leave the premises and call the police.*

8. **Talk with and get help from other people.** This is extremely important! Do not allow yourself to be the only one helping a suicidal person. Recognize the limits of your expertise and responsibility. Share your concerns with appropriate staff members. Do not be bound by secrecy. An angry friend is better than a dead one. **Call UNR**

Counseling Services for help, 8-5pm, M-F, 775-784-4648 or the Crisis Call Line - 24 hrs./day, 7 days a week, 775-784-8090.

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