

Mental Health Matters

Plain Talk about Suicide



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A suicide attempt is a clear indication that something is gravely wrong in a person's life. No matter the race or age of the person; how rich or poor they are, it is true that

most people who commit suicide have a mental or emotional disorder. The most common underlying disorder is depression, 30% to 70% of suicide victims suffer from major depression or bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among individuals age 15-24 and the eighth leading cause of death among all persons. Although suicide is considered a uniquely individual act, there are some common trends and traits that can help us with suicide awareness and prevention.

People who are contemplating suicide may display one or more warning signs. It is important to be aware of these signs so that interventions can occur. The following are possible warning signs; trouble with eating and sleeping, withdrawal from friends and activities, loss of interest in hobbies, having drastic changes in behavior, severe mood swings or severe moodiness, being preoccupied with death and/or dying (talking about it, drawing pictures, reading, story-telling), and giving away prized possessions.

People contemplating suicide often find themselves in what they consider to be an intolerable situation. They become rigid in their thinking and are often unable to see alternatives other than suicide. Often there are prevailing feelings of hopelessness. Almost everyone who commits or attempts suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats.

Some risk factors associated with suicide are: loss of a significant other, recent suicide of a peer or family member, legal difficulties, bullying or harassment, family stress (including divorce, separation, unemployment), difficulties in relationships, psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, neglect or abuse, serious health problems or physical impairment (self or family member).

No single approach is suitable for all suicidal persons or suicidal tendencies. The most common ways to treat underlying illnesses associated with suicide are with medication; talk therapy or a combination of the two. Some other resources in the community to help with suicide are telephone hotlines, (which can be obtained from the telephone book), local Mental Health Associations, community centers, clergy, medical professionals, and law enforcement agencies. If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call HSC's crisis line at 724-651-9000.

For more information on other mental health topics, go to our website at www.humanservicescenter.net

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