

Suicide Prevention: Recognize When It's Time To Get Help



[Image Courtesy Pexels](#)

Suicide is the [tenth](#) leading cause of death in the United States, taking the lives of 13 percent of the population each year. It takes men, women, and children alike, causing untold devastation to the lives of millions of families. The good news in all this darkness is that suicide can be prevented. Most people who commit suicide don't necessarily want to die: they just want to stop hurting.

Factors:

Sixteen million people a year have a major [depressive](#) episode. The causes of depression are myriad-- genetic factors, environment, and health outlook can all play a part. The strongest predictor of whether someone who is thinking about suicide will go through with it is the presence of [comorbid](#) personality disorders, such as bipolar and major depressive disorder. There is also a strong correlation with substance abuse. This may come down to simple timing: since personality disorders and substance abuse problems are chronic, the individual suffers for a longer period of time and typically makes more suicide attempts. But there is no single symptom that can predict whether someone will kill themselves. Most people who think about it will not do it. And sometimes people who consider it don't discuss it with anyone. Eight out of 10 people who kill themselves will give warning signs, but two of them will give no sign of trouble at all.

Warning Signs:

A person who has reached the [crisis point](#) and is in danger of suicide is experiencing unbearable pain. They may speak of feeling trapped, hopeless, helpless, as if they have no reason to go on. Their behavior may demonstrate recklessness. They may abuse drugs and alcohol, withdraw from friends and family, and start giving away their possessions. Emotionally, they may be depressed, irritable, rage filled, or even tranquil and filled with peace. Their thinking may become clouded and their problem-solving skills can deteriorate.

Risk Factors:

People with a history of suicide in their family background are more likely to complete their own. The presence of chronic health disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental illness all [increase](#) the likelihood that someone will try to take their own life. Stress factors like work or relationship difficulties and financial problems all increase the pressures that can drive someone to self-harm. Perhaps most disturbing is the phenomenon of "[suicide clusters](#)." One suicide can trigger a rash of copycats. Research indicates that teens and young adults are particularly vulnerable. With the prevalence of social media, more people are impacted by suicide than ever before, increasing the chance of suicide contagion.

The Journey Back To Health:

Early intervention is crucial. When a person is sinking into depression and becoming emotionally unwell, they lose the ability to think clearly, and their judgment becomes impaired. They may literally be unable to recognize help when it is offered to them. Their coping skills get short-circuited such that even small stressors can produce terrible consequences. Professional help may be needed. Those struggling with suicidal thoughts while in the grip of a substance abuse problem may benefit from [inpatient treatment](#), where they can be monitored through the rigors of withdrawal and their safety ensured until the crisis has passed. Successful intervention will help the patient to reconnect with the world and develop skills for changing negative thought patterns. Good programs focus on improving the whole person, not just treating the addiction or the psychological problem. Working toward a greater level of physical and emotional wellness will increase the patient's self-esteem and improve their skill set. It teaches mindfulness, or the state of focusing on the present and living in the moment.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. While it ends one person's pain, it transfers that pain to their family, friends, and loved ones. The entire community is damaged as a whole. But it is preventable; if the root causes of suicide are addressed, sufferers can be helped and tragedy averted. We are all our brother's keeper, and should be watchful for the signs that someone is sinking under the weight of their suffering.