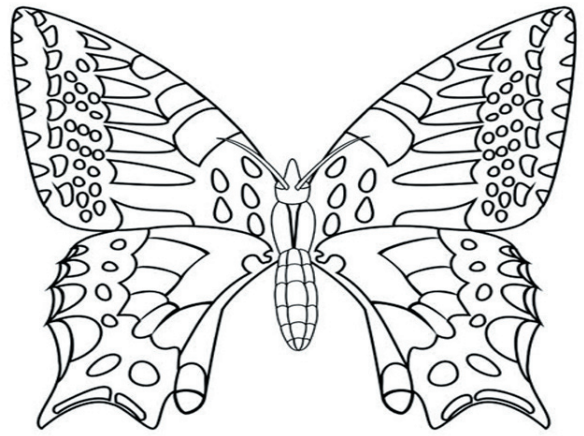


Suicide Prevention

Information Sheet



Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US, and the 3rd leading cause of death for people ages 15-24. The suicide rate in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina is now twice the local and national average.

This information sheet was prepared to help identify some early warning signs of suicide and to suggest some coping skills and preventive strategies. There is no simple cure or solution for the feelings of despair, loss, and hopelessness that leads someone to take their own life. Everyone is different and what works for some will not help for others. Suicide remains a tragedy without easy answers.

Suicide Warning Signs:

- Ongoing feelings of hopelessness, despair, and thoughts that there is nothing to live for.
- Extreme life stress such as disaster, abuse or trauma; recent loss or rejection.
- Isolation, loneliness, and not being able to enjoy the company of friends and family.
- Not sleeping or eating for multiple days, or sleeping too much.
- Reckless actions or sudden change in behavior. Making preparations such as goodbyes or burning journals.
- Feelings that you would like to hurt yourself or other people.
- Constant thoughts or voices telling you that you deserve to die or suffer; preoccupation with death.
- Seeking out ways to hurt oneself and making suicide plans. Past history of attempts.

Note: self-injury such as cutting and scarring is not usually a warning sign of suicide. Treating people as suicidal may alienate them from getting help.

Suicide Prevention:

- You are not alone. Talking about sadness and loss with our families and friends heals communities and makes us stronger together. Find trusted and supportive friends you can openly and honestly talk with. Expressing your thoughts and feelings is incredibly important.
- Even if you are not a professional, just by caring and listening without judgement you can be of help. Often professionals don't understand as well as someone who

has been through it themselves. Forcing someone into the hospital can sometimes be traumatic and violent. Reach out to other sources of help if you can.

- People often use alcohol and street drugs to help block out feelings of despair and hopelessness. These coping mechanisms are short acting, and often increase the feelings of isolation and despair that can lead to suicide. Consider reducing or eliminating drugs and alcohol.
- Alternative healing such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, or meditation are often very helpful.
- Keep your community safe. Lock gun triggers (or don't have guns at all), and don't accumulate medications.
- Each day, look for one thing that you find beautiful, inspiring, amazing, or funny. It could be a flower, music, a child playing, or a comedy video.
- Get involved in community service and activism. Traumatic experiences can be transformed into a source of strength and lead to real changes in society. Helping others turns our suffering and pain into empowerment.
- Suicidal thoughts and tendencies are sometimes a side effect of anti-depressants. If you have been newly prescribed anti-depressants and you have noticed an increase in suicidal thoughts, consider going off them.
- Remember that this too shall pass: time heals. The thoughts and memories which are upsetting you now will be replaced with happy experiences as time passes.
- Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. If we see suicidal thoughts as having a positive side -- a desperate attempt to create change and a demand for a better way of living -- we can consider better ways to channel this energy.

**24-Hour Suicide Hotline:
1-800-273-TALK
(1-800-273-8255)**