



## Preventing Suicide

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), suicide was the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States in 2023. is a top 10 leading cause of death in the United States. This article presents some myths and realities about suicide, as well as information that can help you keep yourself or someone else safe.

**Myth:** Those who talk about suicide don't do it.

**Fact:** Most of the people who either attempted or died by suicide made their intentions known ahead of time by either talking about it or by giving other clues (see Warning Signs below). Talk of suicide should not be ignored or readily dismissed.

**Myth:** If a person is intent on killing themselves, nobody can stop them.

**Fact:** Even a person who is severely suicidal may have mixed feelings about dying. Most people don't want to end their lives; they just want their pain to end. Suicide is often preventable if the person gets help in time.

**Myth:** If you talk about suicide, you give people the idea to kill themselves.

**Fact:** If someone is behaving in a way that makes you worry about them harming themselves, they probably have already been thinking about suicide. Asking somebody directly about suicidal thoughts may even bring a sense of relief to someone who needs help.

**Myth:** Only experts or professionals can prevent suicide.

**Fact:** Suicide prevention is everybody's business, and anyone can help prevent a suicide. By familiarizing yourself with the warning signs, you can identify someone in trouble and guide them to the resources they need.

## Warning Signs

Here are some warning signs that someone may be thinking about suicide. This list is not comprehensive, but it will give you an idea of what to look for if you are concerned.

- Talking about suicide, wanting to die, kill oneself; seeming preoccupied with death
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling worthless, hopeless, or having no reason to live
- Talking about being a burden to others

- Self-harm behaviors, such as cutting
- Suddenly happier and calmer, especially after a period of depression or sadness
- Giving away prized possessions or getting affairs in order
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Acting anxious or agitated, behaving recklessly
- Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations
- Displaying extreme mood swings

## **Risk Factors**

People with the following risk factors may be more likely to harm themselves, especially if they are showing some of the warning signs:

- Previous suicide attempt
- History of mental illness or substance abuse
- Family member or someone close to the person has died by suicide
- Recent or imminent loss of job, relationship, health, or something else important to the person
- Victim of abuse, assault or bullying

## **What to do if you are worried about someone**

If you're concerned that someone you know may be thinking about harming themselves, try to stay calm and find out more about the situation. Remember, you don't have to "fix" them yourself, you just have to help them access the resources they need. Here are some steps you can take to keep them safe:

1. Sit down with them in a private setting and express your concern about what you are observing in their behavior
2. Ask if they are having thoughts of suicide or self-harm
3. Listen attentively and non-judgmentally
4. Reassure them that you have heard them and want to help
5. Let them know that help is available, and guide them to the appropriate resources (nearest emergency room, dialing 911 or 988, texting HOME to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.)

**If you or someone you know are in crisis, please call 911, call/text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988, or text HOME to the Crisis Text Line at 741741.**

**For more information about how to prevent suicide, contact the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#).**

*Talk to someone who can help! To find a licensed psychologist near you, use PPA's Psychologist Locator at <https://www.papsy.org/locator>. For information on other mental health topics, go to <https://www.papsy.org>, then "Resources" and then "Public Resources". PPA offers these articles for informational purposes only; they are not a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.*