



## AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SUICIDOLOGY

Suicide Prevention is *Everyone's Business*  
AAS is a charitable, nonprofit membership organization

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### Warning Signs & Risk Factors

#### A Young Person is at Critical Risk of Suicide if He or She:

- Threatens to hurt or kill him or herself; or talks of wanting to hurt or kill him or herself; and/or
- Looks for ways to kill him or herself by seeking access to firearms, pills, or other means; and/or
- Talks or writes about death, dying or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary. If your friend somehow indicates or communicates suicidal thoughts, get help **immediately** from a mental health professional or a professional in a hospital emergency department, or call 9-1-1.

If a youth shows or expresses any of the following behaviors or symptoms, they may signal a suicidal crisis. An evaluation by a mental health professional is essential to rule out the possibility of suicide and/or to initiate appropriate treatment.

- Feelings of **Hopelessness**
- **Anxiety**, agitation, trouble sleeping or sleeping all of the time
- Expressions of having no reason for living; no sense of **purpose** in life
- Feelings of being **trapped** - like there's no way out
- Increase **alcohol and/or drug use**
- **Withdrawal** from friends, family, and community
- Rage, uncontrolled **anger**, expressions of wanting or seeking revenge
- **Reckless** behavior or more risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Dramatic **mood changes**
- **Giving away** prized possessions



## **Get Help**

Get help by contacting a mental health professional or calling the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). The Lifeline staff can refer you to resources in your community. Lifeline has trained counselors available 24/7. To find support groups outside the U.S., go to [Befrienders Worldwide](#).

## **Risk Factors for Suicide:**

Keep in mind events and circumstances that increase risk:

### **Having more warning signs.**

If your friend has more than a couple of these warning signs for suicide in the near-term, do contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or a mental health professional: having more than one of these signs has been associated with greater risk of suicidal behavior. (Remember, if a youth has critical warning signs like talking about killing him or herself or dying or looking for ways to kill him or herself, get immediate help.)

### **Losses**

Losses and other events - whether anticipated or actual - can lead to feelings of shame, humiliation, or despair and may serve as triggering events for suicidal behavior. Triggering events include losses, such as the breakup of a relationship or a death; academic failures; trouble with authorities, such as school suspensions or legal difficulties; bullying; or health problems. This is especially true for youth already vulnerable because of low self-esteem or a mental disorder, such as depression. Help is available and should be arranged.

### **Previous suicide attempts**

If your friend has attempted suicide in the past, he or she is at an increased risk for another attempt or suicide. Many suicide attempts go unrecognized, but if you are aware of a previous attempt, pay attention to warning signs. If your friend is expressing some thoughts about suicide, it's okay to ask, "have you ever had these thoughts before?" and if so, "have you ever done anything about them?" This is especially important when conditions are similar to prior attempts.