

Jen is in her senior year of college and has been feeling depressed for months now. Her classes are more difficult than ever and she doesn't know what she will do after graduation. She recently broke up with her long-term boyfriend and feels so alone. Lately, her feelings of sadness and depression are starting to become more severe and all she wants to do is sleep. Sometimes she wonders if things would be easier if she wasn't around, and she has begun thinking about how it would feel to permanently rid herself of this misery. These thoughts scare her, but she can't seem to stop them from going through her mind. Jen knows she needs help, but doesn't know how to ask for it.

-----Suicide-----

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among college students,
second only to traffic accidents

Who is at risk?

- those who are severely depressed or feel hopeless (the combination of hopelessness and agitation is a particular risk)
- those who go through a recent relationship loss may aggravate other risks such as substance abuse or irrational thinking
- those who feel different and feel at fault for their differences (e.g., sexual orientation differences, cultural differences, etc.)
- those who are around other suicidal people (feelings are contagious)
- those who have a past history of suicide attempts and those with a family history of suicide
- those who have made concrete plans or preparations for suicide
- those who have a mental illness and have recently been discharged from a hospital

****Almost all those who commit suicide suffer from a diagnosable mental illness, a substance abuse disorder, or both****

What are the signs?

- violent actions and reactions toward others and self
- feeling overwhelming guilt, shame, or self-hatred
- suicidal impulses, statements, or plans (e.g., giving away prized possessions)
- impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks
- talking about death, committing suicide, or not wanting to live anymore

Warning: Regular or heavy alcohol use can worsen most psychological states, such as, anxiety, depression or eating problems. Alcohol can change the way a person feels in the short run; however, the overall effect only worsens a disorder. Marijuana and other drugs can have similar or more serious effects on the brain.

How can you help if you think a friend is suicidal?

Your support may be the most important factor in preventing someone from committing suicide. If you fear that someone you know is suicidal, ask her how she is feeling and talk to her about suicide. **DO NOT AVOID TALKING ABOUT IT.** To someone who is considering suicide, it can actually be a great relief if you bring it out in the open and discuss it freely, without showing shock or disapproval. This shows that you are taking the person seriously and responding to his/her distress. You can begin a discussion by asking questions like:

- **Have you been feeling sad, unhappy, or depressed?**
- **Do you ever feel hopeless? Does it seem as if things can never get better?**
- **Do you have thoughts of death?**

If the answers to these questions are “yes,” ask deeper questions concerning suicide, like:

- **Do you have any actual plans to kill yourself?**
- **When do you plan to kill yourself?**
- **Is there anything that would hold you back, like your family or religious convictions?**
- **Have you ever made a suicide attempt in the past?**

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If the person has a defined plan, easily accessible means, the method is a lethal one, and/or the time is set, the risk of suicide is very high.

- A professional evaluation may very well be able to make a big difference for someone who is struggling with desperate or suicidal feelings. Many times the feelings stop when the underlying condition (depression, panic disorder, alcoholism, etc.) is addressed. Encourage your friend to see someone who has the training to handle this challenging problem, and stay available to them as they go through this crisis.

Encourage them to speak with a physician or mental health professional.

- Some people may be uncomfortable with the idea of seeking help from strangers. In these cases, it may be helpful if you or another friend offer to accompany the individual to the healthcare center until he or she become more comfortable.

REMEMBER, SUICIDE IS A PERMANENT SOLUTION TO A TEMPORARY PROBLEM

National Hopeline Network: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
National Crisis Line: 1-866-344-HELP (1-866-334-4357)
Covenant House Youth Crisis Line: 1-800-999-9999
American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org
Suicide Prevention Action Network: www.spanusa.org
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org
National Youth Crisis Hotline: www.1800hithome.com (1-800-448-4663)
National Institute of Mental Health- www.nimh.nih.gov

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