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Suicide: Facts, Figures, and How to Help [brochure and video]

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Know the Facts

PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

More than 90 percent of people who kill themselves are suffering from one or more psychiatric disorders.

Depression and the other mental disorders that may lead to suicide are -- in most cases -- both recognizable and treatable. Remember, depression can be lethal.

The core symptoms of major depression are a "down" or depressed mood most of the day or a loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were previously enjoyed for at least two weeks.

Past Suicide Attempts

- Between 25 and 50 percent of people who kill themselves had previously attempted suicide. Those who have made suicide attempts are at higher risk for actually taking their own lives.

Availability of means

- In the presence of depression and other risk factors, ready access to guns and other weapons, medications or other methods of self-harm increases suicide risk.

Warning signs of suicide include:

- **Observable signs of serious depression:**
  Unrelenting low mood
  Pessimism
  Hopelessness
  Desperation
  Anxiety, psychic pain and inner tension
  Withdrawal
  Sleep problems
- **Increased alcohol and/or other drug use**
- **Recent impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks**
- **Threatening suicide or expressing a strong wish to die**
- **Making a plan:**
  Giving away prized possessions
  Sudden or impulsive purchase of a firearm
  Obtaining other means of killing oneself such as poisons or medications
- **Unexpected rage or anger**

The emotional crises that usually precede suicide are often recognizable and treatable. Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed. Serious depression can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often it is rather expressed as a loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities that had been enjoyable. One can help prevent suicide through early recognition and treatment of depression and other psychiatric illnesses.

Take it Seriously

- Fifty to 75 percent of all suicides give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.

Be Willing to Listen

- If he/she is depressed, don't be afraid to ask whether he/she is considering suicide, or if he/she has a particular plan or method in mind.
- Ask if they have a therapist and are taking medication.
- Do not attempt to argue someone out of suicide. Rather, let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone, that suicidal feelings are temporary and that depression can be treated. Avoid the temptation to say, "You have so much to live for," or "Your suicide will hurt your family."

If a friend or loved one is threatening, talking about or making plans for suicide, these are signs of an acute crisis.

- Do not leave the person alone; remove from the vicinity any firearms, drugs or sharp objects that could be used for suicide;
- Take the person to an emergency room or walk-in clinic at a psychiatric hospital.
- If a psychiatric facility is unavailable, go to your nearest hospital or clinic. If the above options are unavailable, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Suicide:

Facts, Figures, and How to Help

Compiled by Ken Akers

Information and Resources provided by:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and

The National Institute of Mental Health