



Mental Health Association of Tarrant County
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Suicide and Depression

The Problem of Suicide

In 1998, suicide was the eighth leading cause of death for all Americans, the third leading cause of death for those aged 15-24, and the second leading killer in the college population. These statistics demonstrate the seriousness of suicide, which is often linked to untreated depression. Clinical depression affects more than 19 million adults every year, and 95 percent of college students who commit suicide are suffering from a mental illness, usually depression. Although women suffer from clinical depression and attempt suicide more than men, men are more likely to complete the act. Any talk of suicide by a friend or loved one should be taken seriously and help should be sought immediately.

Symptoms

Depression and thoughts of suicide can impact a person's life in many different ways. Not everyone experiences depression and suicidal tendencies in the same way. Some people may have behavioral changes, while others experience physical changes.

Depression and suicide have many common warning signs including:

- ❖ Sadness or anxiety
- ❖ Feelings of guilt, helplessness or hopelessness
- ❖ Trouble eating or sleeping
- ❖ Withdrawing from friends and/or social activities
- ❖ Loss of interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- ❖ Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- ❖ Anger

Specific signs of potential suicide include:

- ❖ Talking openly about committing suicide
- ❖ Talking indirectly about "wanting out" or "ending it all"
- ❖ Taking unnecessary or life-threatening risks
- ❖ Giving away personal possessions

Depression alone or in combination with aggressive behavior, substance abuse and/or anxiety is found in over half of all suicides. If depression is present, substance abuse, anxiety, impulsivity, rage, hopelessness and desperation may increase the risks of suicide.

Suicide can be also be triggered by a number of things including:

- ❖ stressful events, such as a failed exam or failure to get a job
- ❖ crises in significant social or family relationships
- ❖ interpersonal losses
- ❖ changes in body chemistry
- ❖ high levels of anger or anxiety

How to help a friend

If you notice any of the above warning signs in a friend or loved one, you have reason to be concerned. There are ways that you can be helpful to a friend or loved one who is thinking of taking their own life.

- ❖ Be honest and express your concerns. For example, "You seemed really down lately; is something bothering you?"
- ❖ Ask directly about thoughts of suicide. For example, "Have you thought of hurting yourself?" If suicidal thoughts are expressed it is important to contact the university counseling center, student health center or the local mental health association.
- ❖ Listen and offer emotional support, understanding and patience.
- ❖ Convey the message that depression is real, common and treatable. Suicidal feelings are real and preventable.
- ❖ Offer to accompany your friend to see a counselor.

Resources

- ❖ National Mental Health Association 1-800-989-6642 or www.nmha.org
- ❖ National Institute of Mental Health 1-800-421-4211 or www.nimh.nih.gov
- ❖ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention 1-888-333-2377 or www.afsp.org
- ❖ American Association for Suicidology 202-237-2280 or www.suicidology.org

