



Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Suicide Prevention

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With the recent suicides of designer Kate Spade and TV personality Anthony Bourdain, many of us may be experiencing strong feelings of worry, confusion, fear, and other reactions. These tragedies make it clear that suicide awareness, prevention, and treatment need to be at the forefront of our conversations if we are to dramatically decrease this rising trend.

Currently, suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the U.S. with the highest rates among adults between 45-54 years of age. For young adults, age 15 to 24, it was the third leading cause of death in 2010.

The causes of suicidal behaviors are so complex that a conversation about it can leave us feeling overwhelmed and helpless. And although suicide is determined by many factors, it is important to know that it can be prevented.

The first step is to realize that a suicidal person is not seeking attention, but is in genuine distress. And learning to recognize these warning signs associated with suicidal behavior can also help you know when someone may be in danger.

Warning Signs of Suicide

- An increase in substance (alcohol or drug) use, misuse, or abuse
- Feelings of guilt, hurt, shame, and despair
- Feelings of not wanting to live
- Thoughts of dying or threatening to kill oneself

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Withdrawal from friends and increased social isolation
- Dramatic changes in mood
- Giving away prized possessions, pets, family heirlooms, cars, etc.

How to Help Someone Else

People with suicidal behaviors often reach out for help indirectly. Giving someone the space to talk gives him or her the opportunity to express and process the thoughts and feelings that are causing the distress.

- **Be direct**—Ask the person, “Are you okay”, “Are you thinking about killing yourself”, “How long have you been thinking about suicide?”
- **Ask if the person has a plan**—If so, get specific information about the plan, including if he/she has the means to carry it out. Help remove the means. This is an important safety measure for a person during a short term crisis who may act impulsively.
- **Actively listen**—Listen carefully to find out what the person is thinking and feeling. Acknowledge and empathize as you hear the person’s painful experiences.
- **Encourage him/her to seek help as soon as possible**—If the person is seeing a mental health professional, recommend that he/she contact this professional immediately. If not, provide the 24/7 phone number for the National Suicide Prevention Line: 800-273-TALK (8255); or the National Crisis Text Line: 741741. For those with First Choice Health EAP, you can call the EAP 24/7 for support and resources at 800-777-4114. It will be imperative that the person get connected with ongoing counseling to deal with the underlying issues causing the crisis.

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How to Help Yourself

The truth is, many people have experienced difficult and challenging times in their lives, and for people with depression, suicidal thinking is not uncommon. If you find yourself in this situation:

- **Get professional help**—For in the moment support, call the National Suicide Prevention Line at 800-273-TALK (8255), or the National Crisis Text Line: 741741. For those with First Choice Health EAP, you can call the EAP 24/7 for telephonic support and a counseling referral and other resources at 800-777-4114. You can also speak with your primary care professional if you are feeling triggered by emotions or situations and need help. Speaking with a professional will help you to learn to deal with stress, thoughts, and emotions in a healthy way, and provide ongoing support in the process.
- **Connect with other people**—Avoid being alone. Solitude can increase feelings of isolation and make suicidal thoughts worse. Reach out to a professional, a family member, or friend you trust. Talk to someone. Let that person know what is going on with you.
- **Get rid of lethal means**—If you have thoughts about suicide and have access to firearms, medications, or razor blades, get rid of them, or ask someone to lock them away for you, where you can't access them.
- **Avoid alcohol and drugs**—They can increase feelings of depression and anxiety and can make you impulsive.
- **Create a safety plan**—It's helpful to have an accessible plan with written steps for how to keep yourself safe. Remind yourself of activities to calm/comfort yourself, include contact numbers for your doctor/therapist, family and friends. Then share it with a family member or friend.

Remember that suicidal behavior is not a sign of weakness. People who consider suicide are in distress and feel overwhelmed with feelings of hopelessness, despair, and helplessness regarding their current life circumstances. Many different factors contribute to people feeling like suicide will stop their suffering. By empathetically listening to someone in distress, and learning about the warning signs for suicidal behaviors, you can be an advocate of change for someone who needs your help.

For more information on suicidal behaviors, interventions, and preventions you can visit the EAP website at www.firstchoicееap.com or give us a call at 800-777-4114. We are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

