

## About Suicide

More than 36,000 people in the United States die by suicide every year. It is this country's 10th leading cause of death, and is often characterized as a response to a single event or set of circumstances. However, unlike these popular conceptions, suicide is a much more involved phenomenon. The factors that contribute to any particular suicide are diverse and complex, so our efforts to understand it must incorporate many approaches.

## Suicide Facts and Figures

- Every 14.6 minutes someone in the United States dies by suicide.
- Nearly 1,000,000 people make a suicide attempt every year.
- 90% of people who die by suicide have a diagnosable and treatable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.
- Most people with mental illness do not die by suicide.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among persons aged 15-24 years, the second among persons aged 25-34 years, the fourth among person aged 35-54 years, and the eighth among person 55-64 years.
- Men are nearly 4 times more likely to die by suicide than women. Women attempt suicide 3 times as often as men.

## Risk Factors and Warning Signs for Suicide

There is no single cause of suicide. Several factors can increase the risk, but none indicate that suicide will occur. As a friend, family member or loved one, take warning signs seriously and learn how to respond.

Risk factors for suicide include:

- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Family history of suicide or violence
- Physical illness or chronic pain

Most suicidal individuals give some warning of their intentions. These can include:

Recent impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks

Threatening suicide or expressing a strong wish to die

Making a plan can include:

- Giving away prized possessions
- Sudden or impulsive purchase of a firearm
- Obtaining other means of killing oneself such as poisons or medications

## What You Can Do

Educate yourself by learning the warning signs and how to respond. Consider taking a class or joining a support group. Share your concerns with others.

When talking with a person you feel may be contemplating suicide:

- Acknowledge their pain and invite them to share what they need.
- Listen not only to what they are saying but listen for the unspoken feeling.
- 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 he/she has a therapist and is taking medication.
- Help them to get help and keep them safe if you have concerns about their safety.
- 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."

*Where you used to be, there is a hole in the world which I find myself constantly walking around in the daytime and falling into the night.*

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

## How Faith Communities Can Promote Healing

Faith communities need to talk openly about suicide and provide education about mental illness being a treatable illness instead of a moral or spiritual shortcoming. Have discussions about mental illness with youth groups, older adult groups and other groups that regularly meet.

Use opportunities like Mental Health Month in May, Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month in September and Mental Illness Awareness week in October to talk about mental health issues in worship and to provide resources such as bulletin inserts and other informational resources.

Be aware of local resources and hotlines available in your community and refer when appropriate.

Open your facilities for educational and support groups on mental health issues. Encourage members to take advantage of classes or training in the community like *QPR*. *QPR* is a training program that in 3 simple steps helps anyone learn to help save a life from suicide...Question, Persuade, Refer.

Train persons to be caring companions to walk with people in their journey.

Make your faith community a vessel of hope by helping each person know they are accepted just as they are as a precious child of God.

*The prayer and support of our family of faith helped us survive after losing our son to suicide 7 years ago. Our grief was their grief because Todd was a vital member of this faith community. They felt his absence in ways that validated our sorrow. This loving community helped us navigate a journey we had never planned to take. They stood by us as our question shifted from "Why?" to "For what purpose? What now?" Our faith community was instrumental in helping my husband and I see God at work within our tragedy, redeeming some of our pain. They gave us courage to keep trusting God.*

There is Help!

There is Healing!

There is Hope

### For More Information

#### **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

#### **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

#### **Suicide Prevention Resource Center**

[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

#### **Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL)**

[www.soslsd.org](http://www.soslsd.org)

#### **Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention**

[www.yellowribbon.org](http://www.yellowribbon.org)

# Suicide



## How Faith Communities Can Provide Hope and Promote Healing

Mental Health Ministries  
[www/MentalHealthMinistries.net](http://www/MentalHealthMinistries.net)