

## **BEHAVIORAL SIGNS OF SUICIDE RISK**

A person might be at risk for suicide if showing any of the following signs (from [American Association of Sociology](#)):

- Talks about committing suicide
- Has trouble eating or sleeping
- Experiences drastic changes in behavior
- Withdraws from friends and/or social activities
- Loses interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Prepares for death by making out a will and final arrangements
- Gives away prized possessions
- Has attempted suicide before
- Takes unnecessary risks
- Has had recent severe losses
- Is preoccupied with death and dying
- Loses interest in their personal appearance
- Increases their use of alcohol or drugs

## **COMMENTS MADE BY SOMEONE CONSIDERING SUICIDE**

Research shows that most (70%) of people who commit suicide have given warnings to others in some form. Warnings might include statements like:

- Sometimes I wish I were dead.
- People would be better off without me.
- Would you like to have my [valuable possession]. I won't need it.
- I'm not sure life is worth living.
- Hopefully I won't be around to find out ...
- You [or boyfriend or girlfriend or family] will be sorry when I'm gone.
- I've lost hope.
- You can't understand how I feel.
- Nobody can possibly understand how upset I am.
- I can't imagine ever feeling better.

## **IF YOU ARE FEELING SUICIDAL**

Recognize that you are suffering from a **treatable** illness. Suicide is a permanent, irrevocable solution to a temporary problem. Talk to someone right away. Seek help from a friend, a counselor, a priest/religious leader, a professor, an RA, an advisor, a coach, or anyone else you know.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Here are some ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide:

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.

- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don't dare him or her to do it.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

### **CONSULT SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP: INVOLVE OTHER PEOPLE**

If you are concerned that a student may be suicidal, consult with an advisor, professor, coach, resident assistant, [University Counseling Center](#), [Campus Safety Services](#), [Residence Life](#), [Student Health Center](#), or the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). You may be afraid your friend about whom you are concerned will feel "betrayed" by your sharing your concern with anyone. Realize that the person NEEDS help and cannot make a good judgment about seeking help. If the person is angry at you - that is a small price to pay in order to save someone's life.

### **COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS**

From [Suicide Awareness Voices of Education "SAVE"](#)

- *"People who talk about suicide won't really do it."*

#### **Not True**

Almost everyone who commits or attempts suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats. Statements like "you'll be sorry when I'm dead," "I can't see any way out," -- no matter how casually or jokingly said may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

- *"Anyone who tries to kill him/herself must be crazy."*

#### **Not True**

Most suicidal people are not psychotic or insane. They must be upset, grief-stricken, depressed or despairing, but extreme distress and emotional pain are not necessarily signs of mental illness.

- *"If a person is determined to kill him/herself, nothing is going to stop him/her."*

#### **Not True**

Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, wavering until the very last moment between wanting to live and wanting to die. Most suicidal people do not want death; they want the pain to stop. The impulse to end it all, however overpowering, does not last forever.

- *"People who commit suicide are people who were unwilling to seek help."*

#### **Not True**

Studies of suicide victims have shown that more than half had sought medical help within six

month before their deaths.

- *"Talking about suicide may give someone the idea."*

**Not True**

You don't give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true -- bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do.

**OTHER RESOURCES**

[American Association for Suicide Prevention](#)

[American Association of Suicidology](#)

[National Catholic Partnership on Disability](#)

[Suicide Organizations & Associations](#)

**JCU RESOURCES**

Campus Safety Services

Office of the Dean of Students

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

Residence Life

Student Health Center

University Counseling Center