

Risk Factors & Warning Signs for Suicide

Factors that Increase Suicide Risk

Risk factors are factors in a person's life that statistically increase the risk that a person will act on suicidal thoughts. It's important to note that the presence of risk factors do not cause someone to attempt suicide, and most people identified as having one or some of these risk factors present will not go on to attempt or die by suicide.

- Depression and other mental health disorders
- Substance use (alcohol or drugs)
- Previous suicide attempt or prior history of self-injurious behavior
- Family history of suicide, mental disorder, or substance use
- Chronic illness and pain
- Exposure to family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Childhood trauma or abuse
- Access to lethal means (firearms in the home)
- Having recently been released from prison or jail
- Losses (relationship, job, housing, children)
- Bullying

Warning Signs for Suicide Risk

Warning signs are thoughts or behaviors that indicate someone might be at elevated risk for taking their own life. People who are in emotional distress or contemplating suicide will usually have a few of these warning signs. If someone you know is experiencing any of the following signs or you notice changes in their behaviors, it is important to get them help as soon as possible.

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Increased anxiety
- Loss of pleasure/interest in hobbies and activities
- Increased substance use (alcohol or drugs)
- Acquiring lethal means
- Increased anger, rage, or agitation
- Extreme mood swings (this can include a sudden mood lift after a period of being down)
- Uncharacteristically reckless behavior
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Mentioning strong feelings of guilt and shame
- Giving away sentimental items and wrapping up loose ends
- Expressing hopelessness or helplessness
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Making plans for suicide
- Talking about being a burden, feeling trapped or in unbearable pain, wanting to escape, or wanting to die

If you notice any of these warning signs, especially with the presence of any risk factors identified above, it's important to ask the person if they're thinking about suicide. If you're unsure how to do this, get help from someone you trust or call the 24/7 National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988. Knowing these warning signs and risk factors may help save a life.