

# ACT now to stop a suicide

*What to look for -- and what to do -- if you are concerned about someone*

*Tragically, suicide is a fatal response to a treatable illness, usually depression.*

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### Part I Suicide Risk Questionnaire

#### Have you heard someone say:

- Life isn't worth living
- My family would be better off without me
- Next time I'll take enough pills to do the job right
- Take my (prized collection, valuables)--I don't need this stuff anymore
- I won't be around to deal with that
- You'll be sorry when I'm gone
- I won't be in your way much longer
- I just can't deal with everything--life's too hard
- Nobody understands me--nobody feels the way I do
- There's nothing I can do to make it better
- I'd be better off dead
- I feel like there is no way out

#### Have you observed:

- Getting affairs in order (paying off debts, changing a will)
- Giving away articles of either personal or monetary value
- Signs of planning a suicide such as obtaining a weapon or writing a suicide note

### Part II Depression Risk Questionnaire

#### Have you noticed the following signs of depression:

- Depressed mood
- Change in sleeping patterns (too much/little, disturbances)
- Change in weight or appetite
- Speaking and/or moving with unusual speed or slowness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, slowed thinking or indecisiveness
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, or guilt
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

#### If depression seems possible, have you also noticed:

- Extreme anxiety, agitation, or enraged behavior
- Excessive drug and/or alcohol use or abuse
- Neglect of physical health
- Feelings of hopelessness or desperation

## Questionnaire interpretation

If you checked circles under:

- Part I only: Your friend may be at risk for suicide and should seek professional help immediately.
- Part II only: Your friend may be suffering from depression and should seek further evaluation with a mental health professional or his or her primary care physician.
- Parts I and II: The suicide risk is even higher: strongly encourage your friend to seek professional help immediately.

## WHAT TO DO if you suspect someone you care about is considering suicide

*ACT: Acknowledge, Care and find Treatment.*

### 1. Acknowledge

- Do take it seriously.  
70% of all people who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.
- Do be willing to listen.  
Even if professional help is needed, your friend or loved one will be more willing to seek help if you have listened to him or her.

### 2. Care

- Do voice your concern.  
Take the initiative to ask what is troubling your friend, co-worker or loved one, and attempt to overcome any reluctance on their part to talk about it.

### 3. Treatment

- Do get professional help immediately.  
If the person seems willing to accept treatment, do one of the following...
  - Call 1-800-304-7468 to find resources in your area.
  - Bring him or her to a local emergency room or community mental health center.  
Your friend will be more likely to seek help if you accompany him or her.
  - Contact his or her primary care physician or mental health provider.
 If the person seems unwilling to accept treatment...
  - Call 1-800-304-7468 or a local emergency room for advice.  
And if all else fails... call 9-1-1.

## What NOT to do...

- × Don't try to cheer the person up, or tell them to snap out of it.
- × Don't assume the situation will take care of itself.
- × Don't be sworn to secrecy.
- × Don't argue or debate moral issues.
- × Don't risk your personal safety. Just leave, and then call the police.

## Did you know that...

- 70% of people who commit suicide tell someone about it in advance, and most are not in treatment.
- Sometimes those contemplating suicide talk as if they are saying goodbye or going away forever.
- Nearly 50% of suicide victims have a positive blood alcohol level.
- Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed.
- Serious depression can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often is expressed instead as a loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities that were once enjoyable.
- Between 20 and 40 percent of people who kill themselves have previously attempted suicide.
- Those who have made serious attempts are at much higher risk for actually taking their lives.