

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk Factors

- Previous suicide attempt
- Current talk of suicide/making a plan
- Strong wish to die/preoccupied with death (thoughts, music, art, reading)
- Mental health disorders, particularly depression
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- Access to lethal means
- Family history
- Aggressive-impulsive behavior
- Oppression and prejudice
- Bullying
- Physical/sexual abuse/trauma
- Contagion/imitation
- Perfectionism
- Chronic pain/physical illness
- Stressful life events and losses

Protective Factors

- Effective behavioral & physical health care
- Support for seeking help
- Problem-solving skills
- Meaningful roles
- Restricted access to lethal means
- Strong connections to family, friends, community



Warning Signs*

- Verbal
- Behavioral
- Mood
- Physical
- Feelings/Thoughts
- Environmental/Situational

***Any changes or unsettling comments should be investigated as there is some need not being met (whether suicide is the issue or not)**

Warning Signs

- **Verbal (direct/indirect)**

- Being a burden
- Feeling trapped
- Being in unbearable pain
- Having no reason to live
- Killing themselves

- **Behavior**

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online, stockpiling pills, getting a gun
- Acting recklessly; aggressively; easily agitated
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Increased use of alcohol/drugs
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate
- Change in grades
- Chronic truancy, running away
- Self-harm (i.e., cutting, burning, scratching)



- **Mood**

- Depression
- Loss of interest/pleasure in usual activities
- Rage/anger
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Anxiety
- Sudden happiness in someone who has been extremely sad



- **Physical**

- Eating disturbances, changes in sleep patterns
- Chronic headaches, stomach problems, menstrual irregularities
- Fatigue/loss of energy

- **Feelings/Thoughts**

- Feeling trapped, as if there is no way out
- Feeling or expressing no reason for living, no sense of purpose, hopelessness; apathy
- Thinking about death or suicide

- **Situational/Environmental factors**

- Stressful life events which may include a death, divorce, or job loss
- Prolonged stress factors which may include harassment/assault, bullying, relationship problems, being expelled, and unemployment, financial problems
- Anticipated or sudden loss of freedom; fear of punishment, humiliation/embarrassment
- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide
- Recent discharge from hospital or other care facility