

STUDENTS EXPRESSING SUICIDAL IDEATION

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. It is important to view all suicidal comments as serious and make appropriate referrals.

To assess a student at risk for suicide, there are generally four areas to explore.

Plan – Do you have a well-developed plan that includes an easily available method to harm (kill) yourself?

Means – Do you use substances such as alcohol and other drugs that can weaken impulse control?

Prior Behavior – Have you attempted suicide before?

Loss Due to Suicide – Has a friend, family member, or acquaintance taken their life through suicide?

Examining these four areas will help in determining the severity of the threat of a student taking their life

Suggested strategies for supporting a suicidal student:

1. Talk about suicide openly and directly.
2. Be confident, caring, and know the resources available.
3. Contact campus police.
4. Take the student seriously; 80% of suicides give a warning of their intent

Suggested things to avoid:

1. Ignore comments like, “I won’t be a problem much longer,” or “Nothing matters; It’s no use.”
2. Being too busy or scared to intervene.
3. Being afraid of planting the idea of suicide in an already depressed person’s mind.
4. Getting involved with the student without help from professionals. A referral is imperative. If the student refuses help and you believe they may follow through with their threat, immediately contact Campus Police at 895-2351 or 2677 (COPS) from campus phones or dial 911.

High Risk Suicidal Indicators:

- Expresses hopelessness, helplessness, or guilt.
- Sudden mood or behavior changes
- Giving possessions away
- Expresses that life is not worth the trouble
- A severe loss or threat of loss
- Sleeping much more and later than normal
- Not sleeping well and waking up early
- Taking frequent naps
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Not attending class
- Abusing alcohol and drugs
- Engaging in high-risk behaviors
- Change in appetite so the student is not hungry or overeats

- Taking care of business
- A lift in depression, a surge of energy

Facts About Suicides:

- College students have higher suicide rates than non-college people of the same age.
- More men complete suicide, but more women attempt.
- There are more attempts at the beginning and end of semesters.
- People completing suicide rarely want to die; they really want to end the pain they experience.
- Talking about suicide will not plant the idea in a person's mind but will probably relieve some of the tension they experience.
- Suicides rarely occur without warning.
- Feeling isolated (no support group) increases the likelihood of suicide.
- The more developed the suicide plan, the greater the likelihood.
- If the student has made attempts in the past, they are at higher risk for future (and possibly more serious) attempts.