

Keeping youth safe

a guide for parents & caregivers

Youth Warning Signs

MOST SUICIDAL YOUTH DEMONSTRATE OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS SIGNALLING SUICIDAL THINKING

Behavioral Clues

what they do



Verbal Clues

what they say



- Current talk of suicide/making a plan
 - Direct or indirect threats- even jokes about suicide
- Strong wish to die/preoccupied with death
- Feeling anxious and depressed, not sleeping
- Abusing substances
- Impulsivity/increased risk taking/increased apathy
- Giving away prized possessions
- Self-destructive acts (i.e., cutting)
- Acquiring a gun or stockpiling pills
- Feeling hopeless - no reason to live, no purpose in life
- Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain/distress
- Chronic truancy, running away
- Sudden decline in academic performance
- Sudden improved mood

Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts, or feelings (*particularly in the presence of the warning signs above*)

Specifically, this includes significant:

- withdrawal from social connections/situations
- change in interaction with family and friends
- changes in sleep(sleep deprivation, sleep disturbance, etc.)
- anger or hostility that seems out of character/out of context
- recent increased agitation or irritability

We all have mental health

SOMETIMES IT'S HEALTHY AND STRONG... AND SOMETIMES IT'S HURTING AND NEEDS SOME EXTRA CARE AND ATTENTION.



Check in and normalize the conversation: Stigma causes people to isolate themselves and believe the negative things they think other people are saying.



Asking someone directly about suicide lowers anxiety, opens up communication and lowers the risk of an impulsive act.

Youth Risk Factors

RISK FACTORS DO NOT CAUSE OR PREDICT A SUICIDE.

RISK FACTORS ARE: CHARACTERISTICS OR CONDITIONS THAT INCREASE THE CHANCE A PERSON MAY CONSIDER OR ATTEMPT SUICIDE

Situational Clues

what they experience



- Being expelled from school/fired from a job
- Interpersonal conflict, family stress/dysfunction
- Isolation or alienation from family or peers
- A recent unwanted move
- Loss of any major relationship (friend, significant other, teacher, therapist, counselor, pet, etc.)
- Death of a family member, friend or peer - especially if by suicide
- Diagnosis of a serious or terminal illness
- Sudden unexpected loss of freedom/fear of punishment
- Feeling embarrassed or humiliated in front of peers
- Victim of assault or bullying
- Fear of becoming a burden to others
- Financial problems (their own or within the family)
- Mental illness, especially severe depression, but also post traumatic stress, ADHD, and substance abuse
- History of suicidal thinking and behavior
- Presence of a firearm in the home

I'm worried about my child



- **ASK DIRECTLY** if they are thinking about suicide
 - Say things like: "You know, sometimes when people are as upset as you seem to be, they wish they were dead, are you feeling that way?"
- **LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT**
- **EXPRESS CONCERN** - offer reassurance and focus on being understanding and caring
 - Say things like: "You are not alone. I'm here for you." "I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help." "You are important to me; we will get through this together."
- **GET HELP** - call the Colorado Crisis hotline **1-844-493-8255 (TALK)**, go to a or go to a [walk in crisis center](#) (they are free & confidential), go to the nearest emergency department, or contact your child's therapist or other trained mental health provider.