

Suicide Prevention

Warning Signs of Possible Self-Destructive Behavior

It should be noted that no one of these signs listed below in itself is necessarily a positive indicator that student/or a person is considering suicide. Each must be considered in context and in relation to other signs present. The warning signs include:

1. Previous suicide attempt or gestures.
2. Recent suicide of a relative, friend or peer.
3. Breakdown of family or personal life such as caused by death, divorce, failed romance, move or serious illness.
4. Withdrawal from family and/or friends.
5. Sudden changes in behavior (eating or sleeping patterns, neglect of appearance, reversals of character, positive behavior change following a marked period of depression, angry and explosive outbursts, fighting, vandalism).
6. Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol - especially an increase).
7. Self-destructive acts (slashes of body, etc.).
8. Changes in school performance (drop in grades, failure of courses, difficulty in concentrating, sudden or increase in neglect of school work).
9. Outbursts of violent or rebellious behavior.
10. Running away.
11. Making final arrangements (giving away possessions).
12. Expressions of hopelessness and depression or extreme anger at self or the world.
13. Visits to family doctor for depression.
14. Trouble with the law or authorities.
15. Discussion of suicide plans and method (telling friends about wanting to commit suicide and how it is planned).
16. Preoccupation with death, life after death or suicidal thoughts/threats (written or spoken expression, in artwork or in selection of music listened to).

The most important role in suicide prevention is not to overlook these warning signs. If the signs of suicide are there, so is the risk. Eighty percent of suicide victims communicate their intent to someone. These signs are an important clue that someone is experiencing emotional pain. Overreaction is not nearly as dangerous as the failure to act. Be alert, sensitive and use your best judgment.

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