Often, family and friends are the first to recognize the warning signs of suicide and can be the first step toward helping an at-risk individual find treatment with someone who specializes in diagnosing and treating mental health conditions.

A Shoulder to Lean On

Suicide is a major public health concern. Over 40,000 people die by suicide each year in the United States; it is the 10th leading cause of death overall. Suicide is complicated and tragic but it is often preventable. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives.
The behaviors listed below may be signs that someone is thinking about suicide:

1. Talking about great guilt or shame
2. Talking about feeling empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live
3. Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
4. Making a plan or looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun
5. Taking great risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast
6. Feeling unbearable pain (emotional pain or physical pain)
7. Talking about being a burden to others
8. Using alcohol or drugs more often
9. Acting anxious or agitated
10. Withdrawing from family and friends
11. Changing eating and/or sleeping habits
12. Displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy
13. Talking or thinking about death often
14. Putting affairs in order, making a will
15. Saying goodbye to friends and family
16. Giving away important possessions
17. Changing in appearance
18. Displaying signs of depression

If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.

The U.S. Abroad lends a shoulder hotline, available 24/7, accessible free from land and mobile lines.

RISK FACTORS

Suicide does not discriminate. People of all genders, ages, and ethnicities can be at risk. Suicidal behavior is complex and there is no single cause. In fact, many different factors contribute to someone making a suicide attempt. But people most at risk tend to certain characteristics.

The main risk factors for suicide are:
- Depression, other mental disorders, or substance abuse disorder
- Certain medical conditions
- Chronic pain
- A prior suicide attempt
- Family history of a mental disorder or substance abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Having guns or other firearms in the home
- Having recently been released from prison or jail
- Being exposed to others’ suicidal behavior, such as that of family members, peers, or celebrities

Many people have some of these risk factors but do not attempt suicide. It is important to note that suicide is not a normal response to stress. Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress, not a harmless bid for attention, and should not be ignored.