

**Training Module**

# **Suicide Prevention**

*Presented by*

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# Suicide Prevention

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## *Suicide*

An act deliberately taking one's own life.

### *A few questions to think about as we start?*

- Does anyone know someone who has committed suicide?
- Does anyone know someone who has attempted suicide?

### **Some statistics**

- The World Health Organization reports that someone commits suicide every 39 seconds, making it one of the leading causes of death in the world
- According to official statistics, about a million people die by suicide annually
- According to 2005 data, suicides in the U.S. outnumber homicides by nearly 2 to 1 and ranks as the 11th leading cause of death in the country
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for teenagers
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students

## *Suicide and Gender*

### **How is this related?**

**Here in the in the United States:**

- Men die much more often by means of suicide than do women
- This may be due to the fact that men are more likely to utilize effective violent means such as guns, hanging and use of knives
- Women suffer from depression twice as much as men. This two-to-one ratio exists regardless of racial and ethnic background or economic status.
- A woman takes her own life every 90 minutes in the US
- This pattern has held for at least a century
- A woman in the US attempts suicide every 78 seconds.
- Women primarily use more failure-prone methods such as overdosing on medications

## *Suicide and Age*

### **How is this related?**

**Here in the United States:**

- The suicide rates for men rise with age, most significantly after the age of 65
- The suicide rates in men 65+, is seven times that of females who are 65+
- The suicide rates for women peak between the ages of 45-54 old, and again after the age of 75

## **Facts and Figures Related to Age**

### **Let's talk**

- What may a suicidal person be feeling like?
- What may a suicidal person be thinking?
- What sort of stressors may be happening for a person who is suicidal?

## ***Common risk factors***

**A suicidal person most often has a psychiatric diagnosis. This may include but is not limited to:**

### **Major Depression**

### **Bipolar Disorder**

### **Schizophrenia**

**A suicidal person may be dealing with difficult stressors in their life:**

- An impending separation or divorce
- Sexual Identify issues
- Losing a job
- Death of a loved one
- A serious illness
- Chronic pain
- Financial Crisis

**A suicidal person might be feeling or thinking:**

- Sad
- Insecure
- Humiliated
- Hopeless
- Worthless

# **The Leading Cause of Suicide**

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**The leading cause of suicide is untreated depression**

**Some signs of depression include:**

- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleeping habits
- Withdrawal from friends
- Substance or Alcohol use/abuse
- Violent or rebellious behavior
- Risk-taking behavior

## ***Suicidal Ideation comes first...***

- Suicidal ideation is term used to describe those thoughts about suicide
- Suicidal ideation may have a range from
- vague thoughts or urges to meticulously detailed plans
- The condition requires professional intervention to determine its extent, including the presence of a suicide plan and the patient's means to commit suicide.
- Severe suicidal ideation is a medical emergency requiring immediate attention.

## **Some Questions About Suicide**

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1. What is the number one cause for suicide?
2. How or why do people die by suicide?
3. I feel suicidal. What should I do?
4. How many people die by suicide each year in the U.S.?
5. How many people attempt suicide each year in the U.S.?
6. Do most people who attempt suicide actually die by suicide?
7. If I have thoughts of suicide am I abnormal?
8. Are people that die by suicide weak?
9. Do young people ever die by suicide?
10. Do children die by suicide?
11. Do some people who attempt suicide end up brain damaged?
12. I feel depressed and suicidal. Can I treat myself?

## ***Suicide Warning Signs***

- Appearing depressed or sad most of the time
- Feeling and/or expressing hopeless
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Disrupted sleep patterns; sleeping too much or too little, early morning awakening
- Having low energy, feeling tired most of the time. 111 Gaining or losing a significant amount of weight

## ***Other warning signs***

### **Making statements such as these:**

- "I can't do this anymore."
- "I hate my life."
- "There's no point to this stupid life."
- "This world would be better off without me."
- "Life is not worth living."
- "I don't care about anything anymore."
- "Nothing matters anymore."
- "I want to die."

- Any mention of suicide

### Some more info on warning signs

- It should be noted that some people who die by suicide do not show any suicide warning signs.
- Many people hide their depression because there is still a strong social stigma against mental illness.
- Also, many people believe that they will be perceived as weak, so they also hide their depression.
- **But most people do show suicide warning signs**, so we need to be aware of what the suicide warning signs are, and try to spot them in people. If we do see someone exhibiting suicide warning signs, we need to do everything that we can to help them.

## Depression and Suicide

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### *The Link Between Depression and Suicide*

- 11 Research has shown a strong link between suicide and depression
- 1190% of the people who die by suicide have an existing mental illness or substance abuse problem at the time of their death

### An estimated 19 million Americans suffer from depression.

- Clinical depression is not a temporary case of the "blues." People with depression may experience recurrent episodes of depression that can last anywhere from a few hours to a few months.

### *Depression*

Depression is present if at least five or more of the following symptoms are present during a two-week period; at least one of the symptoms must be either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities.

- Depressed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Change in appetite or weight
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Speaking and/or moving with unusual speed or slowness
- Decrease in sexual drive
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach or guilt
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, slowed thinking or indecisiveness
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

### *Bipolar Disorder and Suicide*

- About 2 million Americans currently suffer from bipolar disorder
- An estimated 3 percent to 20 percent of persons diagnosed with bipolar disorder die by

suicide

- Approximately 20 percent of all patients with bipolar disorder have their first episode during adolescence but diagnosis is often delayed for years
- Delayed recognition that low moods (depression) and highs (mania) are symptoms of a treatable mental disorder will likely contribute to the occurrence of other problems
- 80- 90 percent of people who have bipolar disorder can be treated effectively with medication and psychotherapy.

### *A few things we need to be aware of...*

#### **What is the person's accessibility to destructive means? What is available to aid the attempt?**

**Do they have access to:**

- Fire arms
- Knives
- Medications
- Drugs
- Rope or other objects for hanging
- Bridge

#### **Now you know the facts...**

If someone expresses suicidal ideation, it is your responsibility to jump into action.

- Questions should be direct and asked in several different ways so that the answers obtained have a better chance to be truthful
  - Ask directly if he or she is thinking about suicide. This will let them feel that they have permission to talk about it.
- Remember, this person is hurting, and in pain
  - Be willing to listen. Allow them to express how they are feeling, accept these feelings, and do not judge him/her for having these feelings.

#### **Your initial response should reflect:**

- Kindness
- Empathy
- Compassion
- Sensitivity
- Assurance

### *Some other tips*

- Show your love and support.
- Talk openly and freely about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow them to express how they are feeling, accept these feelings, and do not judge him/her for having these feelings.
- Try to understand their feelings, and reflect this understanding back to them.
- Remain calm. In most instances, there is no rush. Sit and listen, listen, listen. Give understanding and emotional support for his or her feelings. Try to see it from their perspective.

## *Suicide Prevention*

- Deal directly with the topic of suicide. Most individuals have mixed feelings about death and dying and are open to help. Do not be afraid to ask or talk directly about suicide.
- Remember that the person involved in emotional crisis is not thinking clearly. Encourage this individual to refrain from making any serious, irreversible decisions while in a crisis.
- Remove any dangerous objects that could be used to inflict self-harm and get professional help.

### *What can we say...*

- "I care about you. Others care about you, and I do not want to see you hurt yourself."
- "I can tell you are really hurting. Tell me what you are going through. I love you (care about you), and nothing you say will make me reject you."
- "I am concerned for you because you have seemed very sad and down lately. Would you like to talk? I want to listen."
- "I want to try to understand what it is you are feeling. If you will not talk to me about it, can we find someone else that you trust to talk about it with?"
- "I have heard you talking about suicide lately. I am very concerned and what to talk about this with you. Are you feeling so bad that you are thinking of killing yourself?"
- "I care too much to sit by and ignore what is happening to you. It is time we found someone to give you the help you need."
- "I care about you, and I am listening. I know we can get through this together."

### *What should we NOT say...*

#### **Do not:**

- Tell the person they are fine
- Tell the person they are just looking for attention
- Tell the person to suck it up
- Tell the person to get over it
- Tell the person other people have it so much worse than you

### *A few other things to not do:*

- Judge the person - do not tell them they are wrong or that feeling this way is bad. They may choose to quit talking to you.
- Give advice or make decisions for them or tell him/her to behave differently.
- Ask "why"? This encourages defensiveness. Asking "what has happened to make you feel this way?" is better.

## **If Someone Has a Plan...**

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### **If an individual has a plan, even a vague plan, to commit suicide...**

#### **You must create a safety contract**

- This should be completed in written format.
- The written contract should:

- Include signatures of all parties
- The child should read it aloud and then sign it
- Everyone receives a copy
- Format should include other alternatives if child is contemplating hurting themselves

## Let's practice

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Read the attached scenario.

*Write up a safety contract with your client.*

### If you can't get a written contract...

If for some reason you are not face to face with the suicidal individual, the conversation must include:

- A promise that the individual will not hurt themselves
- A promise that if the person is feeling the urge to hurt themselves, they will immediately tell an adult.
- This adult needs to be specifically identified. If this person is not you, this person must be immediately informed of the contract
- Repeat the contract back to the client.

**Make it clear to the individual that you and he/she now have a contract. Make sure you reiterate that you care about the individual.**

### *Just so you know*

**There is no evidence to suggest that asking a person directly about suicide increases the risk.**