

An Informational Toolkit for
TEENAGERS &
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

PROMOTING SUICIDE AWARENESS



This toolkit is donated by the

TODD WAITE LEGACY FOUNDATION

for suicide awareness

www.twlf4suicideawareness.com

Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted

Matthew 5:4

The *TODD WAITE LEGACY FOUNDATION* for suicide awareness

was formed by family members on behalf of the Waite family. The Waite family lost their 19 year old son/brother Todd to suicide in July, 2010. They are now dedicated to spreading awareness about suicide so that others will never have to encounter the pain and loss that they feel.

In 2014 famous actor and comedian Robin Williams along with other celebrities took their own life as a result of a mental illness.

What about the shootings by people with mental illnesses at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Fort Hood, and other places around the world?

It is time to put an end to these tragedies!!

We need to start educating people about mental health, suicide awareness and prevention, and where to turn to for help or comfort in an otherwise confusing time. We have put together some informational toolkits and other literature to point people in the direction of areas for help and information.

Our mission is to spread suicide and mental health information and awareness to: churches, first responders, foster parents, funeral homes, the media, medical professionals, military veterans, police departments, retirement homes, schools, suicide victims, survivors of suicide, the workplace, and anyone or anyplace else that can benefit from our information.

Visit our web site at – www.twlf4suicideawareness.com

Our e-mail address is - twlf4suicideawareness@gmail.com

Check out our Facebook page at - www.Facebook.com/twlegacyfoundation

All of our material is free of charge and can be downloaded from our web site.

Please help us to keep spreading the word about suicide awareness. Visit our web site for information on donations. We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

20 Best Things to Say to Someone Who Is Depressed

1. "I love you!"
2. "I Care"
3. "You're not alone in this"
4. "I'm not going to leave/abandon you"
5. "Do you want a hug?"
6. "When all this is over, I'll still be here and so will you."
7. "All I want to do is give you a hug and a shoulder to cry on.."
8. "Hey, you're not crazy!"
9. "May the strength of your past reflect in your future."
10. "God does not play dice with the universe." -- A. Einstein
11. "A miracle is simply a do-it-yourself project." -- S. Leek
12. "We are not primarily on earth to see through one another, but to see one another through"
13. "If the human brain were simple enough to understand, we'd be too simple to understand it."
14. "You have so many extraordinary gifts -- how can you expect to live an ordinary life
15. "I'm sorry you're in so much pain. I am not going to leave you. I am going to take care of myself so you don't need to worry that your pain might hurt me."
16. "I listen to you talk about it, and I can't imagine what it's like for you. I just can't imagine how hard it must be."
17. "I can't really fully understand what you are feeling, but I can offer my compassion."
18. "You are important to me."
19. "If you need a friend..... "
20. "I'll stick with you no matter what."

PROMOTING SUICIDE AWARENESS FOR TEENAGERS & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The purpose of this Suicide Prevention Awareness toolkit is to provide information and educate everyone about the causes, and warning signs of mental illness and suicide.

The views and opinions expressed in this toolkit are those of the author who formed this information by researching many of the web sites listed in the back. The information in this toolkit may not reflect the policies of all mental health or suicide organizations.

Any material in this toolkit may be reproduced without written consent from the
TODD WAITE LEGACY FOUNDATION
for suicide awareness.

Copies of this toolkit are available on line at
www.twlf4suicideawareness.com

Despite the high death toll of suicidal and mentally ill people, many people have failed to address the problem as a public health concern. Many people view mental illness and suicide purely in terms of its tragic consequences for individuals, not as a problem plaguing society as a whole. Complicating the issue is the stigma attached to suicide and mental health. As a result people with mental illness and possibly contemplating suicide and their families may be reluctant to seek help. Community members may be apprehensive about taking a proactive stance towards the problem.

Suicide and mental health has lagged behind other social problems, such as child abuse and domestic violence, in gaining recognition as an issue that deserves public attention from individuals, organizations, and society. This kind of public attention is essential in order to identify or create the tools and knowledge to prevent suicide, help the mentally ill, and save lives.

Unlike distress signals resulting from physical trauma, such as a heart attack or deadly disease, the pain of people considering suicide may go unrecognized until it is too late. This is why a public health approach to suicide prevention is so important--targeting or identifying at-risk people before they appear in the emergency department of a hospital. Through increasing awareness in the community-at-large, the signs and symptoms of suicide and mental illness can be recognized and addressed.

More than 90 percent of people who die by suicide have depression and other mental disorders, and/or a substance-abuse disorder.

Suicide and mental illness is at the same level as breast cancer was a few years ago. No one dared talk about it and many women died because of the stigma associated with breast cancer. Suicide and mental illness has to be brought to the public attention. People need to be made aware of the symptoms of suicide.

IT IS TIME TO GIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES!

SUICIDE – The Result of a Mental Health Problem

Much of the information listed on the following 3 pages is from SAMHSA's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Crisis Centers Conference in Baltimore, MD
• July 27, 2011

A special thank you to Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. SAMHSA Administrator for providing this information. SAMHSA stands for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. (www.samhsa.gov - 1-877-SAMHSA-7 or 1-877-726-4727)

Here are some tough realities of suicide –

36,000 Americans die by suicide each year

1.1 million (.05 percent) Americans (18 & older) attempted suicide in the past year

2.2 million (1 percent) Americans (18 & older) made a plan in the past year

8.4 million (3.7 percent) Americans (18 & older) had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year

30 percent of deaths by suicide involved alcohol intoxication at or above the legal limit

2005-2009: 55% increase in emergency department visits for drug related suicide attempts by men 21 to 34

2005-2009: 49% increase in emergency department visits for drug related suicide attempts by women 50 or older

Every year some 650,000 persons receive treatment in emergency rooms following suicide attempts

50% of those who die by suicide were afflicted with major depression, and the suicide rate of people with major depression is eight times that of the general population

90% of individuals who die by suicide had a mental disorder

2005 – 2009: More than 1,100 members of the Armed Forces took their own lives; an average of 1 suicide every 36 hours

2010 Army suicide rate (active-duty) soldiers is down slightly (2009 = 162; 2010 = 156)

Number of suicides in the Guard and Reserve up by 55% (2009 = 80; 2010 = 145)

More than half of the National Guard members who died by suicide in 2010 had not deployed

Suicide among veterans accounts for as many as 1 in 5 suicides in the U.S.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES = LIVES LOST

Individuals discharged from an inpatient unit continue to be at risk for suicide

10% of individuals who died by suicide had been discharged from an emergency room within the previous 60 days

8.6% hospitalized for suicidality are predicted to eventually die by suicide

77% of individuals who die by suicide had visited their primary care doctor within the past year

45% had visited their primary care doctor within the month

THE QUESTION OF SUICIDE WAS SELDOM RAISED!!!!!!!!!!

3 PRIORITY AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

Issue One: Too many missed opportunities to save lives in primary care settings

Issue Two: Millions of Americans still lack access to evidence-based care and health based professionals that can reduce suicidal behavior

Issue Three: Too many discharged from emergency rooms/inpatient units following suicide crisis at significantly elevated risk yet 50% referred to care following discharge do not actually receive outpatient treatment

DAILY CRISIS OF UNPREVENTED AND UNTREATED Medical/Suicide attempts

Any Mental Illness: 45.1 million 37.9% receiving treatment

Suicide attempts: 22.5 million 18.3% receiving treatment

Diabetes: 25.8 million 84% receiving treatment

Heart Disease: 81.1 million 74.6% receiving screenings

Hypertension: 74.5 million 70.4% receiving treatment

PERCEPTION CHALLENGES

60% of people who experience mental health problems & 90% of people who experience substance abuse problems and need treatment do not perceive the need for care

Suicides vs. homicides - Suicides outnumber homicides by 3:2

Suicides vs. HIV/AIDS - Twice the number of people die by suicide than who die as a result of complications related to HIV/AIDS

WHAT AMERICANS KNOW

Most know *or* are taught:

Basic First Aid and CPR for physical health crisis

Universal sign for choking; facial expressions of physical pain; and basic terminology to recognize blood and other physical symptoms of illness and injury

Basic nutrition and physical health care requirements

Where to go or who to call in an emergency

Most do not know *and* are not taught:

Signs of suicide, addiction or mental illness or what to do about them or how to find help for self or others

Relationship of behavioral health to individual or community health or to health care costs

Relationship of early childhood trauma to adult physical & mental/substance use disorders

SO, HOW DO WE CREATE A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH THAT:

Engages everyone – general public, elected officials, schools, parents, churches, health professionals, researchers, persons directly affected by mental illness/addiction & their families

Is based on facts, science, common understandings/messages

Is focused on prevention (healthy communities)

Is committed to the health of everyone (social inclusion)

The TODD WAITE LEGACY FOUNDATION for suicide awareness is providing information about mental health and suicide prevention to anyone and everyone who comes in contact with people with mental health issues and suicidal tendencies, and the community-at-large to help identify those at risk, reduce stigma, and take other measures to deter and prevent suicides.

The TODD WAITE LEGACY FOUNDATION for suicide awareness

wants you to know the warning signs of suicide and mental health. They may be listed more than once in this toolkit but they are worth repeating. Everyone needs to learn and know the warning signs You could save a life!!

Warning Signs and Symptoms of Suicide

These signs may mean someone is at risk for suicide. Risk is greater if a behavior is new or has increased and if it seems related to a painful event, loss or change.

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself.
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawn or feeling isolated.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

Additional Warning Signs of Suicide

- Preoccupation with death.
- Suddenly happier, calmer.
- Loss of interest in things one cares about.
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye.
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order.
- Giving things away, such as prized possessions.

Recognize the warning signs of suicide:

Here's an Easy-to-Remember Mnemonic:

IS PATH WARM?

I Ideation
S Substance Abuse

P Purposelessness
A Anxiety
T Trapped
H Hopelessness

W Withdrawal
A Anger
R Recklessness
M Mood Changes

Warning Signs and Symptoms of Mental Illness

The following are signs that your loved one may want to speak to a medical or mental health professional.

In adults:

- Confused thinking
- Prolonged depression (sadness or irritability)
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Social withdrawal
- Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Strong feelings of anger
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Suicidal thoughts
- Denial of obvious problems
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Substance abuse

In older children and pre-adolescents:

- Substance abuse
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Excessive complaints of physical ailments
- Defiance of authority, truancy, theft, and/or vandalism
- Intense fear of weight gain
- Prolonged negative mood, or thoughts of death
- Frequent outbursts of anger

In younger children:

- Changes in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Excessive worry or anxiety (i.e. refusing to go to bed or school)
- Hyperactivity
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Recognize the warning signs:

2014 Facts & Figures on Suicide

Suicide is a preventable public health problem and a leading cause of death in the United States. More investment in suicide prevention, education and research will prevent the untimely deaths of thousands of Americans each year.

Suicide - Basic Facts:

- ❖ An American dies by suicide every 13 minutes, and more than 40,000 die by suicide every year.
- ❖ 3,000 Americans attempt to take their life each day, resulting in over 1 million attempts each year.
- ❖ 90% of the individuals who die by suicide had a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.
- ❖ Depression, bipolar disorder and substance use disorders are among the leading causes of suicide.
- ❖ For every female suicide, there are four male suicides, but three times as many females as males attempt suicide.
- ❖ Suicide is the second leading cause of death among those 10-24 years old.
- ❖ Veterans make up 22% of suicides

Suicide - The Cost:

- ❖ Suicides in one year cost the U.S. over \$20 billion in lost earnings
- ❖ 1.5 million years of life are lost to suicide annually.
- ❖ Suicide attempts requiring hospitalization cost the U.S. \$44 billion each year in medical and work-loss costs

Facts and Fiction About Suicide:

Perhaps because suicide is rarely talked about openly, there are a lot of misconceptions about issues as to who is at risk, why and under what circumstances, and about how to get help. Knowing the facts is critical to taking action and essential to saving lives.

Fiction: Suicide usually happens with no warning.

Fact: Eight out of ten people who kill themselves give some sort of warning or clue to others, even if it is something subtle.

Fiction: There's always a note left behind when someone commits suicide.

Fact: Actually, in most cases, there is no suicide note.

Fiction: Someone who talks a lot about suicide is just trying to get attention.

Fact: It's just the opposite. More than 70% of people who kill themselves have previously threatened to do so or actually attempted to do so. When someone says they feel this way, take it seriously.

Fiction: People who are suicidal are intent on dying and feel there is no turning back.

Fact: Most people who are suicidal are actually of two minds about it. Part of them wants to die, but part of them doesn't. The main thing they want is to stop their pain.

Fiction: People who attempt suicide once are unlikely to try it again.

Fact: 80% of people who die from suicide have made at least one other attempt already.

Fiction: Someone who survives a suicide attempt is obviously not serious about it.

Fact: Any suicide attempt should be treated as though the person intended to die, and not simply dismissed as an attention-getting device.

Fiction: If you mention suicide to someone who seems depressed, you're just planting the idea in his or her mind

Fact: Discussing it openly can actually help, not hurt.

He sat next to her in her senior English class. She was a quiet young woman who got good grades and was on the track team. She was friendly with most of her classmates, but did not seem to have any close friends. He began to realize that something was wrong. She was crying during class. For that whole week, she looked like she was on the verge of tears. She had gained weight. It was very unusual for someone on the track team to gain weight at that point in the track season. He noticed that she didn't wear her track sweatshirt on the day of a meet like the rest of the team. She was no longer listening to the teacher in the English class and that she always looked sad. She got a C on her last English test. One day, he offered her a friendly "How are you doing?," which she returned with a shrug, not looking him in the eye. He was worried, but he didn't know what to do—or even if it was any of his business. He decided to talk to Ms. Shaw, his history teacher, about the situation. He trusted Ms. Shaw. The teacher listened to what he had to say and told him that she would talk to the school counselor about her. Ms. Shaw told him that she would let him know how her meeting with the school counselor went.

This student did the right thing. Even though he was not a close friend—and wasn't even sure that she had a serious problem—he was concerned enough, and brave enough, to help. What would have happened if this concerned student had not talked to his teacher? Maybe nothing . . . and maybe something terrible. Even if she was not thinking about hurting herself, it was pretty clear that she was in trouble and could use some help.

Teens and High School students have their own culture and language. You may know your teenage friends better than their own parents do. And you may be able to tell that something is wrong with one of your classmates when the teachers and faculty advisors can't. You can use your insights to help your friends and classmates find help when they are having problems.

If one of your friends confides in you that he or she has been thinking about suicide and tells you not to tell anyone, the best thing you can do as a friend is to get him or her immediate help.

The Role of Teens in Preventing Suicide

It is always shocking to think that anyone—much less a young person—would want to die. Yet more than 1,200 teenagers die by suicide each year in the United States, and more than 72,000 teens are treated in emergency rooms each year because they attempted suicide (CDC, 2003a). One survey (CDC, 2003b) found that in a 12-month period:

- Almost 17 percent of high school students had seriously considered suicide
- 16.5 percent of high school students made a suicide plan
- 8.5 percent of high school students tried to kill themselves at least once

Why would someone want to die? Sometimes people want to die because they are suffering from a chemical imbalance that causes depression or another mental disorder, and brings them a great deal of pain. Some young people may be overwhelmed by problems, such as drug or alcohol abuse or family violence.

Young people who feel like they want to die are often in so much emotional pain that they cannot see any other solution to their problems. While you probably can't solve these problems for a friend or classmate, you may be able to help the person find someone who can help. And the first step in doing so is recognizing the signs that someone may be at risk of suicide.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

While there is no foolproof method of knowing that a teen may be thinking of hurting him- or herself, the following warning signs might indicate that a young person is considering suicide:

- **A suddenly worsening school performance.** Good students who suddenly start ignoring homework, cutting classes, or missing school altogether may have problems—such as depression or drug and alcohol abuse—that can affect their health and happiness and put them at risk of suicide.

- **A fixation with death or violence.** Teens with problems may develop an unusual interest in death or violence, expressed through poetry, essays, doodling, or artwork; an obsession with violent movies, video games, and music; or a fascination with weapons. Adults often cannot tell a “normal” teen interest in violent video games or music from an obsession that other teens realize is not typical of this age group.
- **Unhealthy peer relationships.** Teens who don’t have friends, suddenly reject their friends, or begin associating with other teens known for substance abuse or other risky behaviors may be in trouble. A friend who suddenly stops hanging out with you for no reason or claims that “you just don’t understand me anymore” may have an emotional problem that he or she is afraid to discuss. That friend may feel isolated and alone and need your help.
- **Violent mood swings or a sudden change in personality.** Kids who become sullen, silent, and withdrawn, or angry and acting out may have problems that can lead to suicide.
- **Indications that the teen is in an abusive relationship.** Some teens may be physically or emotionally abused by a member of their family or their girlfriend or boyfriend. Signs that a person may be in an abusive relationship include unexplained bruises or other injuries that the person refuses to discuss.
- **Other risky behaviors.** Teens who suddenly start having unprotected or promiscuous sex, using drugs or alcohol, driving recklessly or without a license, stealing, or engaging in vandalism may be acting out self-destructive impulses.
- **Signs of an eating disorder.** Anyone who suffers from an eating disorder, or has a dramatic change in weight that is not the result of a medically supervised diet, needs help.
- **Difficulty in adjusting to gender identity.** Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered teens have higher suicide attempt rates than their heterosexual peers. These youth may be faced with social pressures that make life very difficult.
- **Bullying.** Kids who are bullied, pushed around, or harassed may be at risk of suicide.

- **Depression.** Depression is an emotional problem that increases a person's risk of suicide. The following signs indicate that a teen may be depressed:
 - o A sudden worsening in school performance
 - o Withdrawal from friends and extracurricular activities
 - o Expressions of sadness and hopelessness, or anger and rage
 - o A sudden, unexplained decline in enthusiasm and energy
 - o Overreaction to criticism
 - o Lowered self-esteem, or feelings of guilt
 - o Indecision, lack of concentration, and forgetfulness
 - o Restlessness and agitation
 - o Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
 - o Unprovoked episodes of crying
 - o Sudden neglect of appearance and hygiene
 - o Seeming to feel tired all the time, for no apparent reason
 - o Use of alcohol or other drugs

Some warning signs demand immediate action:

- Announcing that the person has made a plan to kill him- or herself
- Talking or writing about suicide or death
- Saying things like:
 - *I wish I were dead.*
 - *I'm going to end it all.*
 - *You will be better off without me.*
 - *What's the point of living?*
 - *Soon you won't have to worry about me.*
 - *Who cares if I'm dead, anyway?*
- Staying by him- or herself rather than hanging out with friends and family
- Expressing the belief that life is meaningless
- Giving away prized possessions
- Neglecting his or her appearance and hygiene
- Dropping out of school or social, athletic, and/or community activities
- Obtaining a weapon or another means of hurting him- or herself (such as prescription medications)

Again, there is no foolproof way of knowing for sure that a teen is thinking of hurting him- or herself. But even if the person isn't thinking of suicide, these warning signs can mean that he or she has other serious problems. By taking action, you can help that person become happier and healthier.

Helping Your Peers

If you think that any of your friends or classmates may be thinking of killing themselves—or have serious problems that they have not told anyone about—tell a responsible adult. Find someone who is concerned with and understands young people and can help. This may be a teacher, guidance counselor, or other member of the school staff. It might also be your parents, the parents or sibling of a friend, a member of the clergy, or someone who works at the local youth center. If this adult doesn't take you or your friend's problem seriously, or doesn't know what to do, talk to someone else. If you need help finding someone who can help, call (800) 273-TALK (8255).

Don't be afraid of being wrong. It is often hard to tell if someone is really thinking about killing or hurting him- or herself. Some of the warning signs for suicide could also be signs of drug or alcohol use, serious family problems, or depression or another mental illness. People with these problems still need help—and you can help.

Just talking to them can make a big difference. Teens will often share secrets and feelings with other teens that they will not share with adults. However, you may need to be persistent before they are willing to talk. Ask them if they are thinking about killing themselves. Talking about suicide or suicidal thoughts will *not* push someone to kill him- or herself. It is also not true that people who talk about killing themselves will not actually try it. If a friend says that he or she is thinking about killing him- or herself, take your friend seriously.

You should be especially concerned if people tell you that they have made a detailed suicide plan or obtained a means of hurting themselves. If they announce that they are thinking of taking an overdose of prescription medication or jumping from a particular bridge, stay with them until they are willing to go with you and talk to a responsible adult—or until a responsible adult can be found who will come to you.

Don't pretend you have all the answers. Be honest. The most important thing you can do may be to help them find help. *Never* promise to keep someone's intention to kill or hurt him- or herself a secret. Let the person know that you would never tell this secret to just anyone, but you will tell a responsible adult if you think the person needs help.

Taking Care of Yourself

If you are having problems and thinking of hurting yourself, tell someone who can help. If you cannot talk to your parents, find someone else: a relative, a friend, a teacher, the school nurse or guidance counselor, or a friend's parents. Or, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-TALK (8255), or 911 and they will help you.

Don't be ashamed or embarrassed. A lot of teens and adults have problems that they cannot solve on their own. Finding the courage to get help is often the first step toward solving your problems and becoming a happier person.

School-Based Suicide Prevention Programs

Schools can help prevent suicide by providing teachers and students with the mechanisms necessary to identify and respond to students who are at risk of suicide as well as other risk and self-destructive behaviors. The following are some important steps that schools can take to reduce the risk of suicide among their students:

- **Implement a school-based prevention program.** These programs can be especially effective when implemented in the context of a comprehensive risk prevention or health promotion program. Such programs can reduce levels of self-harm and other risk behaviors as well as improve levels of wellness and the academic performance of the school.

- **Implement a gate keeping program.** Suicide prevention gate keeping programs train those who have regular contact with young people, such as teachers and youth leaders, to do the following:
 - Recognize behavioral patterns and other warning signs that indicate that a young person may be at risk of suicide
 - Actively intervene, usually by talking to the young person in ways that explore the level of risk without increasing it
 - Ensure that young people at risk receive the necessary services
- **Create a comprehensive school crisis plan.** A crisis plan helps a school respond to any emergency, from a natural disaster to violence in the school community. Such a plan should include procedures for addressing students who try to harm themselves as well as those who are only contemplating it. It should also provide some guidance for the role of individual teachers in identifying and responding to potential suicidal or violent behavior in students, and how to respond when actual violence takes place.
- **Be prepared to engage in postvention.** “Postvention” is a term used to describe prevention measures implemented after a crisis or traumatic event to reduce the risk to those who have witnessed or been affected by the tragedy. The suicide, or violent or unexpected death, of a student, teacher, or even a celebrity can result in an increased risk of suicide for other vulnerable young people. Although rare, a suicide in the community (or even a remote suicide that receives substantial press coverage) can contribute to an increased risk of suicide. Appropriately responding to a tragedy that may put students at risk is an essential part of any crisis or suicide prevention plan.

It Is Vital That Teenagers & High School Students Know How To Recognize Suicide Risk and Prevent Suicide.

Here are some steps:

1. **Notice if the person appears quiet and withdrawn**, oversleeps, has crying episodes, has loss of appetite and energy, appears disheveled, the gaze is downward, the voice tone is flat, consistently negative comments, irritability, or says things like, "Life's not worth living," or "I hate my life," etc.
2. Ask: "How would you **rate your mood right now** on a scale of zero to ten with zero meaning life's not worth living and ten meaning life is great?"
3. If the person rates the mood as 5 or under, ask: "Have you had any **thoughts of suicide** or of harming yourself?" *
4. If the person indicates yes, go to the next step. If the person says, "**I don't know**," hear this as a "yes" to the question in #3.
5. Ask: "Have you **thought about how you might end your life**?" If the person says yes, the risk is increased.
6. Ask: "**What have you thought about as how you might do it**?" If the means is ineffective or non-lethal, such as cutting wrists, risk is lower. If the means is lethal such as using a gun or jumping from a bridge, etc., risk is higher.
7. Regardless of the means, ask: "**Can we agree together** that if you have thoughts of killing yourself, you will speak to me personally (not my voice mail) before carrying out a plan to harm yourself?"

8. If the person says "no" or "I don't know," to the question in #7, say: "What I am hearing is that you are in a lot of pain right now and thinking of ending your life, so **I am going to take you to get help** right now to help to feel better right away. Will you go? I will make sure you get there safely. Is there a family member or someone I can call to go with you?" Or tell the person you will go with them yourself.

9. Arrange for the person to **be accompanied to a help center**, (a hospital or mental health facility) and **call 911 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)** to tell emergency staff you are coming.

10. If the person refuses, then ask the person to wait there with someone while you **call police** in another room to report that the person has threatened suicide with lethal means. Ask the police to come and accompany the person to a help center.

***Note: If the person rates the mood as 6 or over (in answer to the question in #3), after feeling consistently depressed, and she/he now reports life is great and she/he is smiling, the risk may be increased because she/he has decided to end their life and have made all arrangements.**

Don't be afraid of being wrong. It is difficult for even experts to understand who is at serious risk of suicide and who is not. Many of the warning signs for suicide could also indicate problems with drug or alcohol abuse, domestic violence, depression, or another mental illness. Young people with these problems need help—and you can help.

10 Little Known Facts About Suicide

1. The word “suicide” comes from two Latin roots, *sui* (“of oneself”) and *cidium* (“killing” or “slaying”).
2. It is more likely someone will die from suicide than from homicide. For every two people killed by homicide, three people die of suicide.
3. In America, someone attempts suicide once every minute, and someone completes a suicide once every 17 minutes. Throughout the world, approximately 2,000 people kill themselves each day.
4. Suicide is the 8th leading cause of death in the United States.
5. The spring months of March, April, and May have consistently shown to have the highest suicide rate, 4-6% higher than the average for the rest of the year. Christmas season is actually below average. Some studies suggest greater seasonality in suicides in rural rather than urban areas.
6. Over the last decade, the suicide rate among young children has increased dramatically. In 2002, suicide was the sixth leading cause of death of five- to 14-year olds and the third leading cause of death in preteens. Suicidologists are alarmed that children as young as age two are also increasingly attempting suicide.
7. During 2008, 140 American soldiers committed suicide, breaking all previous suicide records in the military. In the first four months of 2009, 91 soldiers committed suicide. If this rate continues throughout 2009, by the end of the year more than 270 soldiers will have killed themselves, leading some scholars to claim there is a suicide epidemic in the military.
8. Although women attempt suicide about three times more often than men, men complete suicide about three times more often than women.
9. Four out of five people who commit suicide have attempted to kill themselves at least once previously.
10. In America, the most common suicide method for both men and women is firearms, accounting for 60% of all suicides. For women, the next most common method is ingesting solid and liquid poison or pills. The next most common method for men is hanging/strangling/suffocation.

IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE
READ THIS FIRST!!!!

If you are feeling suicidal now, please stop long enough to read this. It will only take about five minutes. I do not want to talk you out of your bad feelings. I am not a therapist or other mental health professional - only someone who knows what it is like to be in pain.

I don't know who you are, or why you are reading this page. I only know that for the moment, you're reading it, and that is good. I can assume that you are here because you are troubled and considering ending your life. If it were possible, I would prefer to be there with you at this moment, to sit with you and talk, face to face and heart to heart. But since that is not possible, we will have to make do with this.

I have known a lot of people who have wanted to kill themselves, so I have some small idea of what you might be feeling. I know that you might not be up to reading a long book, so I am going to keep this short. While we are together here for the next five minutes, I have five simple, practical things I would like to share with you. I won't argue with you about whether you should kill yourself. But I assume that if you are thinking about it, you feel pretty bad.

Well, you're still reading, and that's very good. I'd like to ask you to stay with me for the rest of this page. I hope it means that you're at least a *tiny* bit unsure, somewhere deep inside, about whether or not you really will end your life. Often people feel that, even in the deepest darkness of despair. Being unsure about dying is okay and normal. The fact that you are still alive at this minute means you are still a little bit unsure. It means that even while you want to die, at the same time some part of you still wants to live. So let's hang on to that, and keep going for a few more minutes.

Start by considering this statement:

**Suicide is not chosen; it happens
when pain exceeds
resources for coping with pain.**

That's all it's about. You are not a bad person, or crazy, or weak, or flawed, because you feel suicidal. It doesn't even mean that you really *want* to die - it only means that you have more pain than you can cope with right now. If I start piling weights on your shoulders, you will eventually collapse if I add enough weights... no matter how much you want to remain standing. Willpower has nothing to do with it. Of course you would cheer yourself up, if you could.

Don't accept it if someone tells you, "That's not enough to be suicidal about." There are many kinds of pain that may lead to suicide. Whether or not the pain is bearable may differ from person to person. What might be bearable to someone else may not be bearable to you. The point at which the pain becomes unbearable depends on what kinds of coping resources you have. Individuals vary greatly in their capacity to withstand pain.



When pain exceeds pain-coping resources, suicidal feelings are the result. Suicide is neither wrong nor right; it is not a defect of character; it is morally neutral. It is simply an imbalance of pain versus coping resources.

You can survive suicidal feelings if you do either of two things: (1) find a way to reduce your pain, or (2) find a way to increase your coping resources. Both are possible.

Now I want to tell you five things to think about.

- 1 You need to hear that people *do* get through this -- even people who feel as badly as you are feeling now. Statistically, there is a very good chance that you are going to live. I hope that this information gives you some sense of hope.
- 2 Give yourself some distance. Say to yourself, "I will wait 24 hours before I do anything." Or a week. Remember that feelings and actions are two different things - just because you *feel* like killing yourself, doesn't mean that you have to actually *do* it right this minute. Put some distance between your suicidal feelings and suicidal action. Even if it's just 24 hours. You have already done it for 5 minutes, just by reading this page. You can do it for another 5 minutes by continuing to read this page. Keep going, and realize that while you still feel suicidal, you are not, at this moment, acting on it. That is very encouraging to me, and I hope it is to you.
- 3 People often turn to suicide because they are seeking relief from pain. Remember that relief is a *feeling*. And you have to be *alive* to feel it. You will not feel the relief you so desperately seek, if you are dead.
- 4 Some people *will* react badly to your suicidal feelings, either because they are frightened, or angry; they may actually increase your pain instead of helping you, despite their intentions, by saying or doing thoughtless things. You have to understand that their bad reactions are about *their* fears, not about you.

But there *are* people out there who can be with you in this horrible time, and will not judge you, or argue with you, or send you to a hospital, or try to talk you out of how badly you feel. They will simply care for you. Find one of them. Now. Use your 24 hours, or your week, and tell someone what's going on with you. It is okay to ask for help.

Try:

- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TTY:1-800-799-4TTY)
- (In Australia, call Lifeline Australia at telephone: 13 11 14)
- Teenagers, call Covenant House Nine Line, **1-800-999-9999**
- Look in the front of your phone book for a crisis line
- Call a psychotherapist
- Carefully choose a friend or a minister or rabbi, someone who is likely to listen

But don't give yourself the additional burden of trying to deal with this alone. Just talking about how you got to where you are, releases an awful lot of the pressure, and it might be just the additional coping resource you need to regain your balance.

5 Suicidal feelings are, in and of themselves, traumatic. After they subside, you need to continue caring for yourself. Therapy is a really good idea. So are the various self-help groups available both in your community and on the Internet.

Well, it's been a few minutes and you're still with me. I'm really glad.

Since you have made it this far, you deserve a reward. I think you should reward yourself by giving yourself a gift. The gift you will give yourself is a coping resource. Remember, back up near the top of the page, I said that the idea is to make sure you have more coping resources than you have pain. So let's give you another coping resource, or two, or ten...! until they outnumber your sources of pain.

Now, while this page may have given you some small relief, the best coping resource we can give you is another human being to talk with. If you find someone who wants to listen, and tell them how you are feeling and how you got to this point, you will have increased your coping resources by one. Hopefully the first person you choose won't be the last. There are a lot of people out there who really want to hear from you. It's time to start looking around for one of them.



Now: I'd like
you to call
someone.

Resources & Organizations

American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org 202-237-2280

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
www.afsp.org 888-333-2377

American Psychiatric Association
www.psychiatry.org 1-888-35-PSYCH or 1-888-35-77924

Kristin Brooks Hope Center
www.hopeline.com 202-669-8500

Mental Health America
www.mentalhealthamerica.net 1-800-969-6642

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
www.TheNationalCouncil.org 1-202-684-7457

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center
www.safeyouth.org 301-562-1001

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
www.samhsa.gov 877-SAMHSA-7

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education
www.save.org 888-511-7283

Suicide Prevention Action Network USA Inc.
www.spanusa.org 202-449-3600

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org 877-438-7772

The Compassionate Friends
www.compassionatefriends.org 877-969-0010

The Jed Foundation
www.jedfoundation.org 212-647-7544

Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program
www.yellowribbon.org 303-429-3530



TODD WAITE LEGACY FOUNDATION for suicide awareness

Informational Toolkit Order Form

- | <u>Quantity</u> | <u>Toolkit</u> |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| | Clergy |
| | College Students |
| | First Responders |
| | Foster Parents |
| | Funeral Directors |
| | Law Enforcement |
| | Mental Health Issues |
| | Military Veterans |
| | Nurses |
| | Primary Care Providers |
| | Senior Living Communities |
| | Survivors of Suicide |
| | Teachers & Youth Leaders |
| | Teenagers and High Schoolers |
| | The Media |
| | The Workplace |

Send toolkits to:

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

email address _____

Mail order form to: Todd Waite Legacy Foundation, 3857 Canal Ave., Grandville, Mi. 49418

email request to: twlf4suicideawareness@gmail.com or fax form to - 616-534-9708

visit our website at www.twlf4suicideawareness.com for more **Free** information