

Risk Factors & Warning Signs

Being able to notice risk factors for and warning signs of suicide is one of the first steps in preventing suicide. It gives us the information we need to be watchful in ourselves and others around us to know when need to do something to help someone.

Risk Factors

There are some things that can happen to people (environmental), that people can feel or do (psychological), or that are part of who they are (biological) that increase the likelihood of suicide and suicidal behavior.

1. Environmental Factors

- Have been a victim of physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Have been a victim of bullying
- Poor relationships with friends, both feeling rejected and not feeling connected socially
- Living in an area where violence is common, or resources are limited
- Access to lethal means (ex. weapons)
- Knowing someone who has died by suicide
- Not having easy access to mental healthcare
- Previous suicide attempts

2. Psychological Factors

- Not being able to enjoy doing things or being with people
- Wanting to be alone and away from others
- Thinking or talking about wanting to die
- Not seeing any solution to take the emotional pain away
- Believing that there is no hope or that they are a burden on people around them
- Believing they do not matter, do not have anything to offer, or are having negative thoughts about themselves
- Feeling left out or rejected (by friends, family, or community), or feeling extreme loneliness
- Risky behaviors: doing dangerous things they wouldn't have done before
- Thinking that they can't manage their own emotions
- Harming their own body
- Using alcohol or other drugs, especially while feeling down

3. Biological Factors

- Having a family member that has a mental health condition
- Having a family member that has died from suicide
- Males are more likely to die by suicide
- Females are more likely to attempt suicide
- Feeling targeted because of their race or ethnicity.
- Being harassed or not being supported for one's sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression

Warning Signs

Warning signs are clues that may mean that someone is thinking about suicide.

- Acting, feeling, and interacting very differently than they did before
 - Showing extremes in their mood (anger or sadness)
 - Starting or using more alcohol or drugs
- Talking, writing, or posting on social media about suicide
- Looking up ways to harm or kill themselves
- Isolating from others and stopping activities they used to like
- Giving away things that are important
- Writing notes or saying goodbye to people that are important to them

