



September: Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. While suicide prevention is important to address year-round, this month provides a dedicated time to build empathy and understanding about this difficult topic. It may feel taboo, but having regular conversations about mental health, depression or stress activators, and suicide help open the lines of communication around warning signs. Just one conversation may change a life. Suicidal thoughts and self-harm, although common, should not be considered normal and deserve thoughtful and informed attention.

What are the warning signs of suicide?

- Talking about wanting to die.
- Talking about feeling empty or hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions.
- Feeling unbearable emotional or physical pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Withdrawing from friends and family.
- Giving away important possessions.
- Saying goodbye to friends and family.
- Taking great risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast.
- Talking or thinking about death often.
- Using alcohol or drugs more often.
- Changing eating or sleeping habits.
- Talking about feeling great guilt or shame.

Here are five steps that you can take to help someone in emotional pain:

1. **ASK: "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"** It's not an easy question, but studies show that this can decrease suicides and suicidal thoughts.
2. **KEEP THEM SAFE:** Reducing a suicidal person's access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention.
3. **BE THERE:** Listen carefully and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling.
4. **HELP THEM CONNECT:** Save the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number (**call or text 988**) in your phone. You can also help make a connection with a trusted individual like a family member, friend, spiritual advisor, or mental health professional.
5. **STAY CONNECTED:** Studies have shown that the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

Additional Resources:

- NAMI: [https://nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Suicide-Prevention-Awareness-Month-\(SPAM\)](https://nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Suicide-Prevention-Awareness-Month-(SPAM))
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/resources/coping-with-stress-resources.html>
- MHA: <https://mhnational.org/crisisresources>

