

Suicide: Frequently Asked Questions



What Is Suicide?

Suicide is defined as death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior. A **suicide attempt** is self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt might not result in death or injury.

When talking about suicide and suicide attempts, avoid using terms such as “committing suicide,” “successful suicide,” or “failed suicide,” as these terms often carry negative meanings. Instead, use the terms “died by suicide” or “attempted suicide.”

Who Is At Risk For Suicide?

People of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds can be at risk for suicide. Common risk factors include:

- Prior suicide attempt(s)
- Family history of suicide or suicide attempts
- Exposure to others’ suicidal behavior, such as a family member, peer, or media figure
- Loss - of loved ones, pets, job/income, housing, status, etc.
- Depression, other mental health disorder(s), problem gambling disorder, or substance use disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Financial problems, including debt incurred from online sports betting or other types of gambling
- Chronic pain or illness
- School or work problems
- Criminal or legal problems; being recently released from jail or prison
- Exposure to family violence, including physical or sexual abuse and bullying
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies
- Limited or no access to physical or behavioral health services
- Sense of hopelessness

- **People of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds can be at risk for suicide.**
- **Understanding the risks factors and warning signs of suicide can help identify someone who is at risk.**
- **Asking a person if they are thinking about suicide does NOT increase their risk for suicide.**
- **All talk and social media posts about suicide should be taken seriously and require immediate attention.**
- **Call 9-8-8 for guidance and support when someone says they are thinking about suicide.**

Does Everyone With Risk Factors Attempt Or Die By Suicide?

Most people who have risk factors for suicide will not end their lives. Research suggests that individuals who attempt suicide may differ from those who do not attempt suicide in the ways they think, react to events, and make decisions. These differences are most often seen in people with substance use or mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, borderline personality disorder, or psychosis. Risk factors are important to keep in mind; however, someone who exhibits warning signs of suicide may be at greater risk and require immediate attention.



**CONNECTICUT
Clearinghouse**
a program of the Connecticut Center
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

800.232.4424 (phone)
www.ctclearinghouse.org

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

What Are The Warning Signs Of Suicide?

Warning signs that someone may be at immediate risk for attempting suicide should not be ignored. Common warning signs include:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves
- Saying they feel empty or have no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped and not having a way out
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Talking about feeling great guilt or shame
- Showing signs of increased depression, anxiety, or substance use
- Giving away important possessions
- Putting affairs in order, such as making a will
- Withdrawing from or saying goodbye to family and friends
- Taking risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast
- Drastic change in mood, i.e., changing suddenly from very sad to happy, calm, and at peace
- Making a plan or looking for ways to kill themselves, e.g., searching online for lethal means, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun

Do People “Threaten” Suicide To Get Attention?

Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and an alert that someone needs help. Talking about wanting to die by suicide is not a typical response to stress. All talk of suicide should be taken seriously and requires immediate attention.

Will Asking Someone About Suicide Put The Idea In Their Head?

Asking a person if they are thinking about suicide is not harmful. Studies show that asking someone if they are suicidal does not cause them to think about suicide or increase the frequency of those thoughts. Asking someone directly, “Are you thinking of killing yourself?” can be the best way to identify a person who is at risk for suicide.

What Is The Best Way To Help Someone Who Has Thoughts Of Suicide?

If a person shows warning signs of suicide or says they are thinking of killing themselves, get help as soon as possible. Do not leave them alone. Do not promise to keep their suicidal thoughts a secret. Tell a family member, friend, or a trusted adult. Call the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** for guidance and support. **If there is an immediate life-threatening situation, call 9-1-1.** In addition, participation in trainings such as [Question, Persuade, and Refer \(QPR\)](#), [Mental Health First Aid](#) and [ASIST](#) can teach people how to talk with someone who is thinking of suicide. For information on upcoming trainings, email info@ctclearinghouse.org.

What If Someone Posts Suicidal Messages On Social Media?

If an individual posts messages or live streams content that suggests they are thinking about suicide, contact the safety team for the social media platform. They will reach out to the person and connect them with the help they need. To learn more, visit the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline’s webpage about safety and support on social media](#).

For Emergency Assistance

Call 9-1-1 (ambulance, fire, police)

Connecticut Resources

Connecticut Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call 2-1-1

**Department of Mental Health and
Addiction Services (DMHAS)**

www.portal.ct.gov/dmhas

National Resources

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call 9-8-8

Crisis Text Line

Text “Home” to 741741

**American Foundation for Suicide
Prevention**

<https://afsp.org/>

**Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration
(SAMHSA)**

www.samhsa.gov