

WELL BALANCED^o

- SEPTEMBER 2024 -

Suicide Prevention

WE ARE NOT ALONE:

Prevention

SAVES LIVES



In 2022, 49,476 Americans died by suicide and there were an estimated 1.6 million attempts worldwide. Today, suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, especially among working-age adults. Suicide is complex and rarely rooted in a single aspect. While conditions such as anxiety and depression can result in thoughts of suicide, not everyone who has a mental illness is suicidal, and not everyone who contemplates suicide has a mental illness. Personal, relationship, community, and societal risk factors all have influence. Life issues, historical events, biological and psychological health, family history of suicide, and prolonged stress (including abuse and racial trauma) all place someone at greater risk for suicide.

In the face of this serious public health concern, many people feel helpless and lost, left wondering, "What can I do?" The good news is that suicide is preventable. The key is to listen, take timely action led by empathy, and implement evidence-based interventions. Read on for ways you can participate in life-saving suicide prevention efforts if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts yourself and how to look for warning signs in others.

» Be Proactive About Your Mental Health

In discussions of mental health, we are reminded to proactively check in with ourselves to ensure we are maintaining our personal well-being. While this looks different for everyone, practicing good sleep habits, maintaining nutrition and exercise, getting outdoors, and practicing mindfulness are a few key wellness behaviors that can have a positive impact on an individual's mental health. Self-care teaches problem-solving and coping skills and is a major protective factor that lowers the risk of suicide.



In crisis?

If you are in crisis or are with someone in crisis, get connected with emergency mental health care instantly. **Call or text 988** for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline or **text HOME to 741741** for the Crisis Text Line.

» Look for Warning Signs in Others

Let's face it: We spend a lot of time at work. Co-workers are in a position to notice important changes in their colleagues that may signal increased suicide risk.

Warnings Signs:

- » Is there increased aggression or fatigue?
- » Are they sleeping too much or too little?
- » Do they talk about ending their life?
- » Do they express feeling hopeless, trapped, or like a burden to others?
- » Is there an increased use of alcohol or drugs?
- » Are they withdrawing from activities and isolating themselves from family and friends?
- » Are they visiting or calling people to say goodbye?
- » Are they giving away prized possessions?

When someone is considering suicide, their mood may start to change. Unusual feelings of depression, anxiety, irritability, shame, anger, and sudden relief or unexpected improvement may be cause for concern.

» Talk About It

Stigma surrounding mental health challenges and suicide can dangerously interfere with the ability for individuals to get the support they need. The best way to make it “safe” for your peers to ask for help is to talk about it. Normalize open conversations about mental health and especially about suicide prevention. Check in with direct reports, co-workers, family, and friends. Ask how they are really doing and show openness and vulnerability. Conversations on these topics can be intimidating, and you might not know what to say. Use [this guide](#) as a place to start.

» Offer Support

If someone opens up to you about their mental health challenges, it is vital to treat them with kindness and compassion. Your response can impact their sense of security, well-being, and ability to cope. Don't make assumptions—Listen and support them in exploring options for seeking help. As they work through their challenges, check in regularly, but notice when they might need some space. Inviting the person out for lunch, coffee, or even a quick video or phone call can make a positive difference. If you notice their mental health worsening, do not be afraid to direct them to a mental healthcare professional.

Two for One:

Mental health is just as important as your physical health. Stay proactive by scheduling mental health screenings along with regular physicals.



Want more suicide prevention resources?

Talk to your employer to find out what is available to you through employee resource groups (ERGs) or your employee wellness program.

» What to Do When Someone Is in Crisis

If someone is displaying signs of self-harm or says they are considering suicide, take it seriously. Don't brush it off or assume they don't mean it—Assure the person that you care and seek their agreement to accept help. Stay with them and help to remove any lethal means. Next steps include accessing support through the [Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#), the [Crisis Text Line](#), an emergency room, or other mental health services.

Remember: You are not a mental health professional or first responder. It is important that the individual in crisis gets connected with a skilled professional immediately. Be sure to follow up a few days later with the person to see how they are doing by leaving a message, sending a text, or giving them a call.

» Seek Help

If you find yourself or someone you know dealing with poor mental health or suicidal thoughts, reach out in whatever way you can. Access support and counseling options through your employee benefits program, employee assistance program (EAP), or other community resources. **You are not alone.**

Additional Resources:

- » [Get Help \(asfp.org\)](https://gethelp.asfp.org)
- » [How to Deal With Suicide \(crisistextline.org\)](https://www.crisistextline.org)
- » [Frequently Asked Questions About Suicide \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/qa/suicide)

Sources:

- » <https://afsp.org/>
- » <https://blog.ifebp.org/employers-suicide-prevention/>
- » <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/pdf/preventionresource.pdf>

