

## **You May Be Able to Stop a Suicide Today!**

Would you know what to do if someone told you they were tired of life and didn't want to live anymore? Would you recognize the signs of serious depression or know if someone was suicidal? Unfortunately, most of us don't know how to listen for the signs of suicide or depression, and we can miss the opportunity to save a life. You may not be able to tell the difference between normal grief, passing sadness, and serious clinical depression, but the mental health professionals at HSI are trained to do so. They can help you determine if someone you care about needs help.

First, know facts:

- One of top 3 causes of death in youth 12-21 years old is suicide.
- A person commits suicide about every 18 minutes in the United States, but it is estimated that an attempt is made about once a minute.
- About 2/3 of people who complete suicide have a depressive disorder at the time of their death.
- Suicide is preventable ñ most suicidal persons desperately want to live, they are just unable to see alternatives to their problems.
- In about 75% of all suicides, the person gave some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.

Know and watch for the danger signs. A suicidal person may:

- Talk about committing suicide
- Withdraw from friends and/or social activities
- Be preoccupied with death and dying
- Have a recent severe loss
- Experience drastic changes in behavior
- Lose interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Prepare for death by making out a will and final arrangements
- Give away prized possessions
- Have attempted suicide before
- Take unnecessary risks
- Lose interest in their personal appearance
- Increase their use of alcohol or drugs

Finally, if you see any of these warning signs, take them seriously and take action.

Ask what is troubling the person and listen. Even if professional help is needed, the person you care about is more apt to follow such a recommendation if you have listened to him or her.

Don't be afraid to ask whether he or she is considering suicide, or even if they have a particular plan or method in mind.

Let the person know you care and understand, that he or she is not alone, and that problems can be solved.

Seek professional help. Encourage the person to consult with a health care provider or mental health professional immediately. Since suicidal people often don't believe they can be helped, you

may have to assist them in making a phone call or do it for them, and you may need to drive them to a clinic. Do not take the responsibility of intervening alone.

If you have any concerns that the person is in immediate danger of harming themselves, take them to a hospital emergency room or walk-in mental health clinic, or call 911.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. People in the midst of a crisis often believe their dilemma is inescapable and feel an utter loss of control. Those people usually need a caring hand to guide them to help. You can be that person.

HSI a non-profit organization, is part of a statewide network of 'community mental health centers', and is committed to providing affordable behavioral health services. We're here to help. If you have any concerns that someone you care about may be contemplating suicide, call 24 Hour Crisis Intervention at 777-4455. Trained counselors will talk through the situation with you, and assist you in planning what steps to take next.

HSI provides services for individuals, families and children whose lives have been disrupted by problems associated with aging, emotional disturbance, chemical dependency, mental illness, or physical and sexual abuse. HSI has offices in Oakdale, Stillwater, Forest Lake, and Cottage Grove, and annually serves a total of more than 8,000 Washington County residents.