

Warning Signs and Symptoms of Depression and Suicidality

There are many signs and symptoms of depression- these are usually ongoing for days to weeks, and are different from ordinary sadness that we all feel from time to time. If the signs of depression have been present for one to two weeks or more, people should speak with a school counselor, physician, or licensed counselor in the community.

Signs and symptoms of depression:

- Persistent sadness, tearfulness
- Loss of joy or interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Lack of energy or motivation
- Changes in sleep patterns-significant increased or decreased sleep
- Changes in appetite, significant increase or decrease in eating
- Agitation, irritability, hostility
- Hopelessness, increased pessimism, decreased attention to hygiene or appearance
- Social withdrawal, isolation
- Frequent complaints of physical illnesses, such as headaches and stomach aches
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt

The symptoms above generally last more than one to two weeks.

Signs and symptoms of suicidality:

- Complaining of being a bad person or feeling rotten/ worthless inside
- Hopelessness: giving verbal hints with statements such as: "I won't be a problem for you much longer" or "Nothing matters, It's no use, and I won't see you again"
- Putting his or her affairs in order, for example, giving away favorite possessions, cleaning his or her room, throwing away important belongings, etc.
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky behavior
- Feeling trapped- like there is no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family and society
- Anxiety, agitation, inability to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Talking about wishing he/she were dead, wishing he/she would go to sleep and never wake up, saying "I wish I was never born".
- Dramatic mood changes

What to do if you are concerned about a teen or adult:

If a teen is worried about a friend or family member, or feeling depressed or suicidal, he or she should tell a trusted adult: a family member, teacher, school nurse or counselor- anyone who may take action.

If a parent or adult is concerned about someone- ask the person if he or she is thinking of hurting himself/herself or wishing to be dead. Asking will not give the idea to someone who is not already thinking about it, and most people who are thinking of suicide are relieved that someone has asked. Then persuade the person to seek help. If a person has an active plan for suicide, they should be brought to a hospital emergency room for evaluation.

Tips on how to talk to a child or teen about the suicide death of someone in the community

In addition to the usual sadness and shock expressed when someone has died unexpectedly, parents should share that the reasons for suicide are very complex- rarely due to one event or cause. Parents also may express sadness that the person who died did not realize that he or she could have received help. The message we want to give to young people is that suicide is “a permanent response to a temporary crisis”, and that we believe anyone who is struggling with depression, extreme stress, or feeling hopeless can be helped through a crisis period. This places no blame on judgment on a person who has died by suicide, but gives the message that we are sad the person did not find the help they needed in time-and that help is available for anyone considering ending his or her life.

Resource list:

*If you are in a situation where you feel that someone **is at life threatening risk, take him or her to the nearest emergency room.** Other urgent and emergent behavioral health issues can be dealt with by emergency services programs.*

Mobile Emergency Psychiatric Services Programs

Newton area: Riverside Emergency Services: 800-529-5077

(Youth Mobile Crisis Intervention)

National Hotlines- Talk with someone anonymously

National lifeline: 800-273-TALK

Local Hotlines- Talk with someone anonymously

Samaritans Boston: 617-247-0220; 877-870-HOPE

Samaritans of Merrimack Valley: 866-912-4673

Samariteen (Teen line): 800-252-TEEN 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends

GLBTQ youth support:

Fenway Community Health Center 800-399-7337;

The Trevor Project Helpline: 866-488-7386

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center: 800-841-8371

Your Local Counseling Sites or Centers

Make an appointment to meet with a counselor:

Riverside Outpatient Center Newton: 617-969-4925

Newton Youth Outreach: 617-796-4902

Riverside In-Home Therapy Services: 781-433-0672

Project Interface (referrals to local mental health resources): 617-332-3666 x 1411

Websites with resources and information on suicide, depression and grieving:

www.samaritansofboston.org/

www.suicidology.org

www.sprc.org/

www.mentalhealthscreening.org/

www.nimh.nih.gov/HealthInformation/depressionmenu.cfm

www.familyaware.org

www.trevorproject.org resource for GLBTQ youth

www.childrensroom.org resources related to grieving and youth

www.dougy.org resources related to grieving and youth

www.reachout.com stories of hope and help by teens and young adults