



Suicide can affect anyone, even those who seem well-supported

It's difficult to imagine someone you care about taking their own life. But many people around the world do – often without warning.

Their loved ones, coworkers and community members are left to grieve. Many feel a mix of complicated emotions: disbelief, sorrow, anger. Some – especially those closest to them – feel guilty, wondering if they should've known somehow and done something to stop it.

But no one can predict who might attempt or die by suicide. And no one is to blame when someone does. Many people who attempt suicide do so impulsively without warning.

Still, we can all do more to create supportive environments where people in despair know they're not alone. World Suicide Prevention Day is observed each year on Sept. 10 to raise awareness and promote prevention efforts.

Who's at risk?

Suicide affects every region of the world – and people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances. It's linked to:

- Mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol or substance use disorders
- Major life stressors, like financial, relationship or legal troubles
- Chronic medical conditions and pain
- Experiencing disaster, violence, abuse or loss, and a sense of isolation
- Belonging to a group that faces discrimination, such as refugees, immigrants, people of color or LGBTQ+ individuals
- Cultural or religious ideals
- Being incarcerated
- Family history of suicide



September 10

.....

**World Suicide
Prevention Day**

Yet, many people who fall into one or more of these categories never attempt suicide, while others not on the list do. It's difficult to know who's at risk. It could be a coworker who seems happy and as if they're living their best life, a close friend who's always there to help others, or someone else. Stigma and taboo often keep people asking for support, even when they need it most.

That's why it's so important to understand what suicide is – and how to support someone who may be thinking about it.

Show compassion

One of the most important steps is to talk more about mental health and well-being. Letting your loved ones know you're a safe place for them to turn can go a long way in helping them feel connected and supported.

Being open about your own struggles can also help others feel more comfortable sharing theirs.

Clue in on warning signs

Listen closely to what your loved ones and others say, without passing judgment. If they talk about feeling worthless, wanting to die, having no reason to live, killing themselves or getting revenge, those are warning signs.

The way they behave can also signal suicidal thoughts – such as extreme mood swings, sleeping too much or too little, giving away valuables, isolating themselves or increasing their use of alcohol or drugs.

Offer support

If you notice these types of signs – or just get a sense they're struggling – talk to them. Ask how they're feeling and let them know you're here to listen without judgment. It's also OK to ask gently if they're thinking about suicide. (For tips on how to talk about well-being, read "Opening up: Get a deeper conversation started" in this month's toolkit.)

Depending on what they say (or don't say), let them know you care about them and are concerned about their well-being.

For your own part, remember you're not there to fix anything – you're there to be someone they can lean on, so they feel less alone and more supported.

If you're worried they may be in despair or thinking about suicide, focus on how to help them feel supported while doing your best to keep them safe. For example, stay with them until you're confident they're safe or with someone who can support them. If possible, remove substances or items they might use to harm themselves.

Encourage them to connect with a medical or mental health provider who can help them stay safe and find the support they need.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, seek safety and get help right away. **If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.**

To reach a trained crisis counselor, call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (previously known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) at **988** or **1-800-273-TALK** (1-800-273-8255). You may also text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. The lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support.*

* The Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Spanish and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in over 250 additional languages for people who call 988.

Sources:

Cleveland Clinic. [Suicide: What it is, signs, risk factors & prevention](#). July 22, 2024.

HealthDirect. [Suicide warning signs - support, at-risk groups, resources](#).

International Association for Suicide Prevention. [Individuals](#).

Mental Health UK. [Suicide](#).

World Health Organization. [Suicide](#). March 25, 2025.



This program should not be used for emergency or urgent care needs. In an emergency, call 911 if you are in the United States, the local emergency services phone number if you are outside the United States, or go to the nearest ambulatory and emergency room facility. This program is not a substitute for a doctor's or professional's care. Due to the potential for a conflict of interest, legal consultation will not be provided on issues that may involve legal action against Optum or its affiliates, or any entity through which the caller is receiving these services directly or indirectly (e.g., employer or health plan). This program and all its components, in particular services to family members below the age of 16, may not be available in all locations and is subject to change without prior notice. Experience and/or educational levels of Emotional Wellbeing Solutions resources may vary based on contract requirements or country regulatory requirements. Coverage exclusions and limitations may apply.

© 2025 Optum, Inc. All rights reserved. Optum® is a registered trademark of Optum, Inc. in the U.S. and other jurisdictions. All other brand or product names are trademarks or registered marks of the property of their respective owners. Optum is an equal opportunity employer.

WF17894914 345204-062025 OHC