

FINDING HOPE

A TOOLKIT FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION



KNOW THE FACTS

Did you know that suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States? We can help tackle this number but it takes everyone to be aware of the warning signs, understanding the myths related to suicide, and knowing how to get help.



Myth: “Suicide cannot be prevented. If the person is determined to do it, then nothing will stop him/her.”

Suicide can be prevented. When a person feels their life is spiraling out of control, they may start believing that death is the only way out. Mostly the person desires to end their pain, whether it is emotional or physical pain. During this time, talking with the person and seeking professional help can make a difference.

Myth: “People who talk about suicide won’t really do it” or “The person is just looking for attention.”

Those who talk about suicide or express thoughts about wanting to die are at risk for suicide and need your attention. It is estimated that nearly 90% of people who die by suicide give some indication or warning. Take all threats of suicide seriously even if it is made in a casual or joking manner. The person is inviting you to help.

Myth: “Asking a person about suicide will put the idea in their head or give them the idea.”

Because of stigma and shame, it can be hard for people to tell others they are thinking about suicide. Hence, talking about suicide openly is one of the most helpful things you can do. When someone you know is struggling, asking them if they are thinking about suicide gives the person an opportunity to open up and share their troubles. By talking about it you can help them find solutions and save a life.

For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

IS MY LOVED ONE SUICIDAL?

It is normal to have ups and downs and to feel sad at times, especially during hard times. Sometimes a person's sadness can become overwhelming and start to interfere with everyday life. The signs and symptoms of mental illness, including depression, are similar to the warning signs for suicide:

- Talking about wanting to die or kill themselves
- Preoccupation with death and dying, writing about death or searching online
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as hoarding pills or buying a gun
- Talking about a specific plan to end their life
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Making end of life arrangements or giving away prized possessions
- Expressing feeling trapped, hopeless, lonely, or having no reason to live
- Stating "others will be better off without me" or "no one will miss me"
- Losing pleasure and interest in hobbies
- Changes in sleep, appetite, and/or mood
- Chronic physical pain, illness, or loss of independence
- Facing a loss, disappointment, or troubling situation
- Being withdrawn, anxious, irritable, or showing excessive anger
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Not caring about personal safety or behaving recklessly

If you notice these warning signs, your loved one may be thinking about suicide or suffering from a mental health crisis.

Ask the person if he or she is thinking about suicide. If your loved one is suffering from suicidal thoughts or plans, seek help immediately by calling 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255).



For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

HOW TO ASK ABOUT SUICIDE

If you believe your loved one is at risk of suicide, it is very important to ask them directly. A common myth is that asking about suicide will “put the idea into the person’s head”; however, this is not true. Asking about suicide can provide relief by giving the person an opportunity to discuss their feelings and thoughts without judgment.

Although it may be uncomfortable, it is important to be specific. Ask direct questions:

- “Are you thinking about suicide/killing yourself?”
- “Have you planned how you would take your life?”
- “Do you have these items now?”



Allow the person to talk and share their feelings. Express your desire to understand their feelings. Avoid being judgmental and do not agree to keep the person’s suicidal thoughts a secret. Instead, explain your concern and desire to keep them safe. This should include removing items from the home that can be used to end their life such as pills, guns, or chemicals.

There are many options for seeking help. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) or text CSIS to 85511. You can also take the person to a doctor or mental health professional. If they have a suicide plan or they cannot keep themselves safe, take the person to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

WORRIED ABOUT A YOUNG PERSON?

As adults we may be confused when a younger person is having a difficult time. We may be unsure about whether or not it is a “normal” part of growing up. Young people may experience emotional and physical changes that may result in a rollercoaster of feelings and emotions.

No matter how difficult the talk, suicide needs to be included as one of the topics that we regularly talk about with a young person in our life. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for young Hoosiers between the ages of 15 and 24. In 2011, Indiana high school students ranked the highest in the nation for thinking about suicide, and second-highest in the nation for attempting suicide.* Ignoring this issue can have tragic results.



Tips for talking with youth:

- Give your full attention without multitasking and do more listening than talking.
- Remind the young person that overwhelming and confusing feelings are normal.
- Ask directly about suicide. It will give them permission to talk about it and can reduce the anxiety they are feeling.
- Do not minimize their feelings or compare their troubles to your own.
- Tell them you care and you would like to help.
- Do not promise to keep their suicide thoughts confidential.

Trust your instincts. If you are concerned about someone seek assistance from a doctor, mental health professional, or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-272-Talk (8255).

*Indiana Youth Institute. “Youth Suicide in Indiana.” Apr. 2014 www.iyi.org

For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

TAKING ACTION TO KEEP A PERSON SAFE

If someone we know is struggling with thoughts of suicide, it is important to create a safe environment, and to know the action steps for responding to a suicide emergency.

- **Be supportive.** Stay calm, listen, avoid lecturing, take all statements seriously, and do not dare the person to act on his/her thoughts. You can offer hope that alternatives exist and help find support and resources the person needs.
- **Do not keep suicidal intentions a “secret.”** Under no circumstances should you keep this a “secret.” Suicide is about life and death. Taking the steps necessary to keep the person safe is an expression of love, care, and concern.
- **Gather information.** It is important to know the person's current location, if a suicide plan exists, and if the person has access to the method in their plan (e.g. gun).
- **Do not leave the person alone.** If the person has a suicide plan, stay with the person until you are able to get professional help.
- **Remove potential methods of suicide,** such as pills, knives, razors, firearms, or anything else you fear they may use. Keep medications, prescription and over-the-counter, in a secure location and give out only as the person needs them.
- **Get professional help and don't handle the situation by yourself.** Do not assume talking with friends and family is enough to manage the suicidal crisis. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255 for help. If you are unable to keep the person safe or your safety is at risk, call 911.
- **Safety planning.** Help the person develop a set of steps he or she promises to follow during a suicidal crisis to keep themselves safe. See “Safety Plan” insert.
- **Follow-up.** Suicidal feelings can come and go; be proactive and initiate contact and visits. Professionals can help with suicidal feelings. Make sure that the person attends follow-up appointments (offer to take them), takes prescribed medication correctly, and continues to be seen by a doctor or mental health provider.



For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

AFTER AN ATTEMPT

The reasons for a suicide attempt can vary person to person, but a common theme is the desire to feel relief from emotional pain. It is likely you were dealing with a variety of stressful feelings and situations before your attempt, which may still be present today. To help reduce your stress as you return to daily life, here are some helpful first steps:



- Decide in advance how to deal with people's questions about your attempt. It is your decision about how much to share, with whom, and when to tell your story. Examples may include, "I have had a rough time and it would be nice to have someone that can listen and not judge me for my actions;" Or, "I appreciate your concern, but I am not ready to talk about it yet."
- Focus on connecting to things that make life worth living. The pain in your life may have caused you to pull away from activities and people you enjoy. This is a time to rebuild these connections. See "Finding Hope" insert.
- Create a plan to stay safe. It helps to prepare a safety plan in advance that lists coping strategies and resources to help you if suicide thoughts return. See "Safety Planning" insert.
- Work with a counselor to help you recover. Although it is tempting to only lean on friends and family, counselors can provide a judgment-free zone and can help you build healthier coping skills. See "Resources" insert.

For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

FINDING HOPE



After a suicide attempt, it may be hard to get back into the swing of things and find joy in life. It took time for your pain to become unbearable, it will also take time for it to go away. Answering the following statements may help you to find hope to go on living.

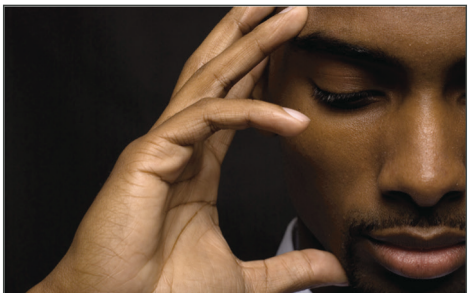
- The important people in my life are...
- What I have always wanted to do in life is...
- My beliefs about suicide are...
- What I cherish in life is...
- Things I enjoy doing are...
- What gives me a sense of purpose is...
- My other reasons for living are...

Reflecting on what gives life meaning and your hopes and dreams can help you begin to find reasons to go on living.

Adapted from "A Journey Toward Health and Hope." Order free workbook at store.samhsa.gov

For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

MANAGING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS



It is important to have a plan of action to keep yourself safe as suicidal thoughts may come and go. You may have moments when life feels overwhelming. Instead of struggling with them on your own, you can use the following tools to reduce suicidal thoughts and protect yourself.

Develop a Safety Plan: A safety plan is a list of coping strategies and resources to help you with thoughts of suicide. It lists other ways to ease your pain rather than suicide. Create your own

by using the “Safety Plan” insert; you can also download the mobile app *Suicide Safety Plan* or *My3 Support Network*.

Hope Box: Build a hope box to remind you why your life is worth living and provide tools to help manage the crisis. It can contain items or objects that represent safety, comfort, distraction, or reasons to live (e.g. letters pictures, music, poetry, quotes, games, etc.). Whenever you are upset or have thoughts of suicide, open your box or you can use the mobile app Virtual Hope Box.

Hope Cards: Make your own index cards. On one side, write a specific negative thought or statement (e.g. no one cares). On the other side, list phrases and statements that can prove the comment is false (e.g. I know [person] cares because [examples]). Use the cards to manage negative thoughts and feelings. Use the mobile app Virtual Hope Box.

Counseling: When you are in pain it is hard to enjoy life and keep yourself safe. Often those struggling with suicidal thoughts find that counselors can help ease the emotional pain. You may need to try a few counselors to find the right fit. See “Resources” insert.

For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

SAFETY PLANNING

It is important to create a Safety Plan that lists warning signs and steps you can take in case suicidal thoughts return. If you have a smart phone, there are apps to create your own safety plan, such as *Suicide Safety Plan*, *My3 Support Network*, *Stay Alive*, and *Virtual Hope Box*. You can also print out a template at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Step 1: Warning Signs. Triggers that may lead you to thoughts of suicide, such as an anniversary of a loss, alcohol, stress from relationships, or other warning signs like changes in mood or behavior.

Step 2: Reasons to Live. Things that are important to you that can bring you hope.

Step 3: Coping Skills. Things you can do to distract yourself from negative feelings or thoughts (relaxation, physical activity, review your hope box).

Step 4: Safe Places. Social places that help you to feel safe or that can provide a healthy distraction.

Step 5: People I Can Ask for Help. Individual names and contact information for those you can turn to when suicidal thoughts do not go away.

Step 6: Professionals. Counselors, doctors, or agencies that can help when you cannot keep yourself safe, including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255).

Step 7: Remove items. In order to be safe during a crisis; you need to remove or reduce your access to items that can be used to end your life. Ask friends or loved ones to help with this step.



RESOURCES

CRISIS LINES

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** suicidepreventionlifeline.org **800-273-TALK (8255)**
- **Mental Health America Crisis Line:** Text **CSIS** to **85511**
- **Trevor Project** (LGBTQ youth and young adults): thetrevorproject.org **866-488-7386**
- **RemedyLive:** remedylive.com **888-807-2226**

LOCAL RESOURCES

Information and Referral

- **STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana:** stopsuicidenow.org **260-422-6441**
- **Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana:** MentalHealthFrontDoor.org **260-422-6441**

Mental Health and Addictions Services

- **Bowen Center:** bowencenter.org **800-342-5653**
- **Headwaters Counseling:** headwaterscounseling.org **260-744-4326**
- **Park Center:** parkcenter.org **260-481-2700**
- **Northeastern Center:** necmh.org **800-790-0118**
- **Parkview Behavioral Health:** parkview.com **800-284-8439**
- **St. Joseph Behavioral Health:** stjoehospital.com **260-425-3606**

NATIONAL RESOURCES

- **American Association of Suicidology:** suicidology.org **202-237-2280**
- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:** afsp.org **888-333-AFSP (2377)**
- **Society For The Prevention of Teen Suicide:** sptsusa.org **732-410-7900**
- **Suicide Prevention Resource Center:** sprc.org **877-438-SPRC (7772)**

HELPFUL WEBSITES AND APPS

- **Suicide Safety Plan** (phone app): moodtools.org
- **Suicide Safety Plan** (printable version): suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- **My3 Support Network** (phone app): my3app.org
- **Virtual Hope Box** (phone app): t2health.dcoe.mil/apps/virtual-hope-box
- **Now Matters Now** (online program): nowmattersnow.org
- **Beating the Blues** (online program): beatingthebluesonline.org
- **Lifeline For Suicide Attempt Survivors & Families** (online): lifelineforattemptsurvivors.org
- **LOOKup Indiana** (online resources): lookupindiana.org



For more information about suicide prevention and awareness contact
STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

(Available 24/7)

For more information on suicide prevention and awareness contact:

STOP Suicide Northeast Indiana at 260-422-6441

stopsuicidenow.org

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT



**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND
FAMILY STUDIES INSTITUTE**
INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE
AN IPFW CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



Colleen Carpenter Consulting

Lea Ann Gebhard Powers (Graphic Design)

**This material is not intended to provide medical advice and is not a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you feel you are experiencing a potentially life-threatening problem, please call 9-1-1 or the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).*