

CRISIS & SUICIDE PREVENTION

Recognizing Signs of Emotional or Mental Health Crisis



Verbal Cues

Whether in the form of a poem, essay, art, intercepted note, heard in conversation or otherwise expressed, any direct messages, such as:

"I am going to commit suicide"
"I don't want to live any more."

Whether in the form of a poem, essay, art, note, in conversation or otherwise expressed any indirect messages that convey thoughts of death or a desire to die or end one's pain, such as:

"Life isn't worth living"
"I want to go to sleep and never wake up"
"Soon it won't matter anymore"
"Do you think suicide is wrong?"

In either case, never leave a student alone and bring them to your building's mental health professional immediately. Follow your district or building protocol.

Behavioral Cues

In addition to the above verbal cues, we must be aware of behaviors. Each of the following behaviors by itself may not signal suicidal thinking or depression, but if several are present, there could be cause for serious concern. In either case, consultation with your building's mental health professional is warranted as soon as possible.

- Depression, moodiness, sadness, or lack of energy
- Changes in sleeping habits (too much, too little)
- Changes in eating habits (sudden weight gain, weight loss)
- Discouragement about the future, self-criticism
- Recent lack of concern about physical appearance, hygiene
- Withdrawal from social contacts or communication difficulty

- Giving away prized possessions
- Drop in school grades or work performance
- Acquiring the means for suicide (guns, drugs, rope)
- Making final arrangements, writing a will
- Taking unusual risks
- Increased drug or alcohol use
- Preoccupation with death through poetry and/or artwork
- Previous suicide attempts (80% of those who kill themselves have attempted it before)

Situational Cues

The following events frequently lead to crisis. Some people have sufficient internal and external resources to cope. For others, intense feelings coupled with a lack of external resources can result in serious emotional crisis.

- End of a serious relationship
- Death of a loved one
- Divorce
- Loss of a job
- Financial difficulties
- Moving to a new location
- Isolation

Sources

Crisis and Suicide Prevention adapted from:
<http://www.sccenter.org/signs.html>