What leads to suicide?

No One Takes Their Life for a Single Reason

Suicide most often occurs when stressors and health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness and despair. Depression is the most common condition associated with suicide, and it is often undiagnosed or untreated.

Most people who actively manage their mental health conditions go on to engage in life. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance use problems, especially when unaddressed, increase risk for suicide.

Visit Someone Who Can Help
Your Primary Care Provider
Mental Health Professional
Walk-in Clinic
Emergency Department
Urgent Care Center

Find a Mental Health Provider
findtreatment.samhsa.gov
mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help

Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255); Veterans: Press 1

Text TALK to 741741
Text with a trained crisis counselor from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7

Call 911 for Emergencies

Be a lifesaver.
Learn how you can stop suicide at afsp.org.
Some People are More at Risk for Suicide Than Others

Health Factors
- Mental Health Condition
  - Depression
  - Substance use problems
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Schizophrenia and psychosis
  - Personality traits of aggression, mood changes and poor relationships
  - Conduct disorder
  - Anxiety disorders
- Serious or Chronic Health Conditions and/or Pain
  - Traumatic Brain Injury

Environmental Factors
- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Prolonged stress, such as harassment, bullying, relationship problems or unemployment
- Stressful life events, which may include a death, divorce or job loss
- Exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

Historical Factors
- Previous Suicide Attempts
- Family History of Suicide
- Childhood Abuse, Neglect or Trauma

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions, that when combined, increase the chance that a person may try to end their life.

Most people who end their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.

Mood
- People Who are Considering Suicide Often Display One or More of the Following Moods
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Loss of interest
  - Irritability
  - Humiliation
  - Agitation
  - Rage

Behavior
- Behaviors That May Signal Risk, Especially if Related to a Painful Event, Loss or Change
  - Increased use of alcohol or drugs
  - Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for materials or means
  - Withdrawing from activities
  - Isolating from family and friends
  - Sleeping too little or too much
  - Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
  - Giving away prized possessions
  - Aggression
  - Fatigue

Watch for Suicide Warning Signs

Talk
- If a Person Talks About
  - Killing themselves
  - Feeling hopeless
  - Having no reason to live
  - Being a burden to others
  - Feeling trapped
  - Unbearable pain

Assume You’re the Only One Who Will Reach Out

If You’re Concerned About Someone
- Take the Person Seriously
  - Someone considering suicide is experiencing a life-threatening health crisis and may not believe they can be helped.
  - Work with them to keep them safely away from lethal means like firearms and drugs and remind them that their suffering is temporary.
  - Stay with them and call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
  - Be sure to follow up with them after the crisis to see how they’re doing.

If You’re Struggling
- Don’t Wait for Someone to Reach Out
  - Seek mental health treatment, or tell your clinician about your suicidal thinking.
  - Treat yourself like you would treat someone else who needs your help.

Avoid
- Debating the value of life
- Advice to fix it
- Minimizing the person’s feelings

If a Person Says They Are Thinking About Suicide
- Take the Person Seriously
  - Someone considering suicide is experiencing a life-threatening health crisis and may not believe they can be helped.
  - Work with them to keep them safely away from lethal means like firearms and drugs and remind them that their suffering is temporary.
  - Stay with them and call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).
  - Be sure to follow up with them after the crisis to see how they’re doing.

If You’re Concerned About Someone
- Talk in Private
  - Listen to their story, and let them know you care. Ask directly about suicide, calmly and without judgement.
  - Show understanding and take their concerns seriously. Let them know their life matters to you.
  - That one conversation could save a life.

If You’re Struggling
- Don’t Wait for Someone to Reach Out
  - Seek mental health treatment, or tell your clinician about your suicidal thinking.
  - Treat yourself like you would treat someone else who needs your help.