



San Diego's Voice On Mental Illness

Teen Suicide

Some common symptoms of these disorders include:

- **Extreme personality changes**
- **Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable.**
- **Significant loss or gain in appetite**
- **Difficulty falling asleep or wanting to sleep all day**
- **Fatigue or loss of energy**
- **Feelings of worthlessness or guilt**
- **Withdrawal from family and friends**
- **Neglect of personal appearance or hygiene**
- **Sadness, irritability, or indifference**
- **Having trouble concentrating**
- **Extreme anxiety or panic; hallucinations or unusual beliefs**
- **Drug or alcohol use or abuse**
- **Aggressive, destructive, or defiant behavior**
- **Poor school performance**

Most everyone at some time in his or her life will experience periods of anxiety, sadness, and despair. These are normal reactions to the pain of loss, rejection, or disappointment. Those with serious mental illnesses, however, often experience much more extreme reactions, reactions that can leave them mired in hopelessness. And when all hope is lost, some feel that suicide is the only solution. **It isn't.**

Some Basic Facts

In 1996, more teenagers and young adults died of suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia and influenza, and chronic lung disease **combined.**

In 1996, suicide was the second-leading cause of death among college students, the third-leading cause of death among those aged 15 to 24 years, and the fourth-leading cause of death among those aged 10 to 14 years

Suicide "Signs"

There are many behavioral indicators that can help parents or friends recognize the threat of suicide in a loved one. Since mental and substance-related disorders so frequently accompany suicidal behavior, many of the clues to be looked for are symptoms associated with such disorders as depression, bipolar disorder (manic depression), anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug use, disruptive behavior disorders, borderline personality disorder, and schizophrenia.

Other indicators

There are also some more obvious signs of the potential for committing suicide. Putting one's affairs in order, such as giving or throwing away favorite belongings, is a strong clue. And it can't be stressed more strongly that any talk of death or suicide should be taken seriously and paid close attention to.

Open Your Mind



***Mental Illnesses
Are Brain Disorders***

1-800-950-NAMI

How to help

Since people who are contemplating suicide feel so alone and helpless, the most important thing to do if you think a friend or loved one is suicidal is to communicate with him or her openly and frequently. Make it clear that you care; stress your willingness to listen. Also, be sure to take all talk of suicide seriously. Don't assume that people who talk about killing themselves won't really do it. An estimated 80 percent of all those who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions

or mention their feelings to a friend or family member. And don't ignore what may seem like casual threats or remarks. Statements like "You'll be sorry when I'm dead" and "I can't see any way out," no matter how off-the-cuff or jokingly said, may indicate serious suicidal feelings. One of the most common misconceptions about talking with someone who might be contemplating suicide is that bringing up the subject may make things worse.

This is **not** true. There is no danger of "giving someone the idea." Rather, the opposite is correct. Bringing up the question of suicide and discussing it without showing shock or disapproval is one of the most helpful things you can do. This openness shows that you are taking the individual seriously and responding to the severity of his or her distress.

Save a life!

If the threat is immediate, if your friend or loved one tells you he or she **is** going to commit suicide, you must act immediately. Don't leave the person alone, and don't try to argue. Instead, ask questions like, "Have you thought about how you'd do it?" "Do you have the means?" and "Have you decided when you'll do it?" If the person

has a defined plan, the means are easily available, the method is a lethal one, and the time is set, the risk of suicide is obviously severe. In such an instance, you **must** take the individual to the nearest psychiatric facility or hospital emergency room. If you are together on the phone, you may even need to call 911 or the police. Remember, under such

circumstances no actions on your part should be considered too extreme—you are trying to save a life. **Take all threats seriously—you are not betraying someone's trust by trying to keep them alive.**

NAMI San Diego

NAMI San Diego, a non-profit organization, provides education, support services, and advocacy to improve the quality of life of everyone affected by mental illnesses. It is an affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and NAMI California. Its membership includes persons with brain disorders, their families, friends, mental health professionals and supportive members of the community.

NAMI offers monthly informational meetings, a monthly newsletter, free educational programs, a lending library of books and video-tapes, and support meetings for consumers and families throughout the county.

For information and support call:

**NAMI San Diego
Helpline**

**619.543.1434 or
800.523.5933**

**www.namisaniego.org
information@namisd.org**