Suicide is a major public health concern. Over 41,000 people die by suicide each year in the United States. More than twice as many people die by suicide each year than by homicide.

Suicide is tragic. But often preventable.

Knowing the risk factors for suicide and recognizing who is at risk of committing or completing suicide can help reduce the suicide rate.

Learn how you can intervene safely and successfully.
Who is at Risk for Suicide?

Suicide does not discriminate. People of all genders, ages, and ethnicities can be at risk for suicide. But people most at risk tend to share certain characteristics.

Anyone experiencing the following are at risk of suicidal thoughts and/or actions:

- Depression
  (Or Other Mental Disorders)
- Substance Abuse Disorder
- A Prior Suicide Attempt
- Family History of Mental Disorders
- Family History of Substance Abuse
- Family History of Suicide
- Family Violence
  (Including Physical or Sexual abuse)
- Guns or Firearms in the Home
  (Easily Accessible)
- Incarceration
  (Being in prison or jail)
- Exposed to others’ suicidal behavior
  (That of family members, peers, or media)

Risk for Suicide is Complex

Research suggests that people who attempt suicide differ from others in many aspects of how they think, react to events, and make decisions.

The Many Pieces Leading to Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors

There are differences in aspects of memory, attention, planning, and emotion. These differences often occur along with disorders like depression, substance use, anxiety and psychosis. Sometimes suicidal behavior is triggered by events such as personal loss or violence.

In order to be able to detect those at risk and prevent suicide, it is crucial that we understand the role of both long term factors – such as experiences in childhood – and more immediate factors like mental health and recent life events. Researchers are also looking at how genes can either increase risk or make someone more resilient to loss and hardships.

Suicide is not a normal response to stress. It is, however, a sign of extreme distress, not a harmless bid for attention.
How can suicide be prevented?

Effective suicide prevention is based on sound research. Programs that work take into account people's risk factors and promote interventions that are appropriate to specific groups of people.

Research has shown that mental and substance abuse disorders are risk factors for suicide.

What should I do if someone I know is considering suicide?

If you know someone who is considering suicide, do not leave him or her alone.

Seek professional help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room, or call 911.

Remove any access they may have to firearms or other potential tools for suicide, including medications.

Psychotherapy can reduce suicide risk.

One type is called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT can help people learn new ways of dealing with stressful experiences by training them to consider alternative actions when thoughts of suicide arise.

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)

A therapist trained in DBT helps a person recognize when their feelings or actions are disruptive or unhealthy, and teaches the skills needed to better handle tough situations.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1-800-273-(TALK) 8255

Trust your instincts.
If you think the situation may be serious, seek immediate help.
If necessary, break confidence in order to save a life.