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# Seek Support if You are Considering Suicide

Suicide has a stigma it just can’t seem to shake.

But, contrary to those negative notions, considering or committing self-harm isn’t an inherent sign of weakness. Indeed, the reality is that most people who think about, attempt, or commit suicide are coping with serious health conditions including depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder.

For instance, anywhere from 30 to 70 percent of people who commit suicide deal with major depression or bipolar (manic depressive) disorder, according to statistics from [Mental Health America](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/suicide). Alcohol and drug abuse are the second-leading risk factor for suicide. In fact, those grappling with substance use disorder are about six times more likely than the general population to commit suicide, according to figures cited by [*Psychology Today*](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/real-healing/201402/suicide-one-addiction-s-hidden-risks)*.*

The good news is that these conditions are treatable and that successful treatment will not only address underlying health conditions, but reduce the prevalence of self-harm in American society. (In 2016, 46,965 Americans committed suicide, making it the country’s 10th-leading cause of death. What’s more, an estimated 25 people attempt suicide for every fatality.)

**Common Risk Factors and Warning Signs**

But it’s difficult to address underlying causes once someone is already considering self harm. So, it’s important to recognize the [risk factors](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/riskprotectivefactors.html) and [warning signs](https://afsp.org/about-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs/) for suicide. Although the signals aren’t set in stone, here are some common risks and warnings to be aware of:

*Risk Factors*

* Having a family history of suicide
* Attempting suicide previously
* Having a history of mental disorders (especially clinical depression)
* Having a history of alcohol and substance abuse
* Being aware of local epidemics of suicide
* Experiencing loss related to relationships, finances, employment or another significant area

*Warning Signs*

* Talking about committing suicide
* Expressing feelings of hopelessness
* Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
* Isolating themselves from family and friends
* Sleeping too much or too little
* Displaying signs of depression or anxiety

If you or someone you know seems to be in imminent danger of harming themselves, experts recommend calling 911 and reaching out to other sources of immediate help, such as the the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/) (1-800-273-8255). The Lifeline is funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and is staffed by trained crisis workers who are available to provide free and confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Treatment Options**

Once you or your loved one are not in immediate danger, it’s imperative to address any underlying conditions driving the desire to commit suicide. And, just like the warning signs and risk factors, treatments vary widely depending on the patient and their specific diagnosis.

For instance, if you are diagnosed with clinical depression, your health care team could prescribe medications, psychotherapy, a day treatment program, or hospitalization in severe cases, according to information from the [Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20356013). Similarly, treatment for bipolar disorder could include medication, psychotherapy, and hospitalization in addition to other treatment options. Or, if you are dealing with substance abuse or addiction, your health care team could recommend a stay in an [inpatient rehabilitation facility](http://www.drugrehab.org/inpatient-drug-rehab/), which should also work on treating common conditions, such as depression, that often occur alongside abuse and addiction.

Members of your healthcare team may also help you develop a safety plan that lists strategies for you to try if you are ever considering self harm. A safety plan may consist of a list of warning signs and self-coping strategies such as relaxation techniques. It may also prompt you to create a list of social settings and people who can provide a positive distraction to thoughts of self harm as well as a list of trusted people and professionals you can contact for help if your situation escalates into a crisis.

No matter what your underlying issues may be, it’s important to realize that you shouldn’t try to stifle suicidal thoughts on your own. Instead, you should handle them just like you would any serious symptom of a medical condition -- by seeking support and professional help to protect your health and happiness.