Suicide Prevention

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death for people aged 15 to 34. Suicide is a serious public health problem. The APA reports each year in the United States, more than 40,000 people die by suicide (one every 15 minutes) and 1 million people attempt suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Men are nearly four times more likely than women to take their lives. The APA reports suicide is linked to mental disorders, particularly depression and alcohol use disorders, and the strongest risk factor for suicide is a previous suicide attempt. Knowing the risk factors and recognizing the warning signs for suicide can help reduce the suicide rate.

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center defines risk, protective factors and warning signs:

- **Risk Factors and Protective Factors:**
  - Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that an individual will consider, attempt or die by suicide.
  - Protective factors are characteristics that make it less likely that individuals will consider, attempt or die by suicide.
  - Warning signs indicate an immediate risk of suicide.

- **Warning Signs of Suicide:**
  - Often talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide
  - Making comments about being hopeless, helpless or worthless
  - Expressions of having no reason for living; no sense of purpose in life; saying things like "It would be better if I wasn't here" or "I want out"
  - Increased alcohol and/or drug misuse
  - Withdrawal from friends, family and community
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- Reckless behavior or more risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Dramatic mood changes
- Talking about feeling trapped or being a burden to others

The APA suggest in some cases, an immediate stressor or sudden catastrophic event, failure or humiliation like a relationship break-up, legal problems, financial problems (e.g., home foreclosure or job loss) can leave people feeling desperate, unable to see a way out, and become a “tipping point” toward suicide. Also recommends if someone indicates they are considering suicide, listen and take their concerns seriously but don’t be afraid to ask questions about their plans. Let them know you care, and they are not alone. Encourage them to seek help immediately from a knowledgeable professional. Don’t leave them alone.

Find the complete list of warning signs and risk factors, at the American Association of Suicidology, and Understanding Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide

http://www.suicidology.org/ncpys/warning-signs-risk-factors

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