

Reaching Out for Help When Your Thoughts Scare You

About one in every 25 adults think seriously about killing themselves each year. Unfortunately, many do not realize that with help, lives can be saved. Unfortunately, many people who consider suicide are too frightened of their thoughts to reach out for help.

Depression and frequent thoughts about death can cloud one's thinking and make it more difficult to solve problems. A mental form of tunnel vision can develop, leading to a concentrated focus on death and the belief that very few other options exist. If sleep is disrupted, or if one is drinking or using other drugs, thinking clearly can become even more difficult. Problems can seem overwhelming when in a depressed state. When one's brain is not performing at its best, suicide can seem like the answer, but it does not need to be.

No matter how difficult the situation is, suicide does not need to be your solution.

Don't Let Stigma Get in the Way

The silence surrounding depression, self-harm, and suicidal thinking can be lethal. Many may resist getting help because of a belief that they are weak or have let their family down. It's not that person's fault. If they are thinking about killing themselves, it is likely that they have an illness---a *treatable* illness. Depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia, impulse control problems, and other conditions are all treatable. The stress and depression that result from significant loss can also be

treated. There are specialists who are trained to help people recover from suicidal thinking. With help, life gets better.

Don't Try to Manage It Alone

As thoughts of suicide creep into the mind, it is common to pull away from others and start to mistakenly believe that no one cares. Suicidal thinking can be unrealistic. If this is happening to you or a loved one, know that you are not alone. People do care. Reach out for help.

Remember There Are Other Options

Even if it is not always easy to see them, other options are available. That is why it is so important to take the initial



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step of asking for help. It is helpful to rely temporarily on others who can see choices and solutions that are not apparent to those looking through the fog of depression and suicidal thinking. As one recovers, it is easier to perceive a range of choices and solutions available to improve life.

Treatment Can Take Many Forms

Many people with suicidal thoughts are able to recover on an out-patient basis with the assistance of a trained therapist. Sometimes medication is recommended, at least initially, to help them to jumpstart their recovery. If they are not able to stay safe, a short period of hospitalization may be recommended. The person who is suffering can play a role in developing their own treatment plan. Speaking with a primary care physician, a mental health counselor, an EAP specialist, or a Suicide Prevention Lifeline counselor can begin the process of recovery.

For Those Who Care About Someone Who Is Suicidal

For those that have never been suicidal, this behavior can be difficult to understand. Suicide's appeal is that it offers an end to overwhelmingly distressing thoughts and feelings. When a person's ability to manage strong emotions and think through problems is diminished, suicide can seem to be the best option, at least in that moment. Most people who are suicidal are ambivalent about dying. If they could find a different option, they would choose it. With effective treatment, suicidal people often choose to stay alive and to work on improving conditions in their lives.

About one in seven adults who had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year will make a suicide attempt. That tells us that even people who have some suicidal thoughts often do NOT go on to attempt suicide. Linking a person to effective help reduces the risk that a person will harm or kill him or herself. The people who are in the best position to start the process of getting help are usually people known to the suicidal person. This includes family members, friends, and co-workers. If you are concerned about someone, reach out to gather information and develop a plan. Start a conversation about your concerns. Depression is the psychiatric diagnosis present in at least half of all suicides. Depression and other mental health conditions are treatable, but they cannot be treated unless a person finds help.

Your action can be the one that keeps a suicidal person alive long enough to access help.

In the United States, call the 24 hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or visit the website:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK

In Canada, visit the Suicide Prevention website to find support information for your province:

<http://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/>

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