



Suicide Prevention

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Montgomery County Crisis Center

240-777-4000



Montgomery County Crisis Center

- 24/7 Services serving all Montgomery County Residents
- No fees, no appointment needed
- Telephone, walk-in, mobile crisis and residential crisis
- Staffed 24/7 by licensed mental health professionals/crisis intervention specialists



The Stress Vulnerability Theory

We all have a limited capacity for stress; exceeding that capacity will result in any or all of the following:

- Physical effects
- Psychological effects
- Emotional effects
- Behavioral effects



Continuum of Suicidality

Suicidal and other self-harming
behavior



Suicidal
Thoughts

Suicidal
Gestures &
Rehearsal

Suicide
Attempts

Completed
Suicide



Motivations for Suicidal Behavior

- To end pain
- To escape problems/consequences
- Excessive guilt
- In response to psychotic symptoms
- Communication
- Attention-seeking
- Manipulation
- Cry for help



Warning Signs

- Depressed mood
- Hopelessness
- Helplessness
- Preoccupation with death, dying
- Absence of focus on future, lack of pleasure in life
- Comments about not being able to go on or life not worth living
- Low self-worth
- Unpleasant, derogatory or destructive command voices or messages
- Very distressing symptoms such as disturbing, frightening delusions (false, fixed beliefs)



Risk Factors

- Acute or unresolved grief and loss issues
- Health issues
- Financial hardship
- Legal hardship
- Relationship issues
- Mental illness
- Failure to achieve normal age-related life goals
- History (trauma, abuse, suicidal behavior)
- Substance abuse



Keys to Prevention

- Early Recognition
- Early Intervention
- Enhancing support systems
- Enhancing coping skills
- Keeping communication channels open
- Opportunities for observing
- You can inform the treatment provider even if they don't have a release to speak to you



Keys to Prevention

- Understanding the mental illness
- Balancing demands placed on the person
- “Pick your battles”
- Living in your home provides additional leverage
- On the other hand you may need to set limits/have the person move out if home life is getting unmanageable/unsafe

Successfully getting thru stressful times and situations, with support, builds resilience



How to Ask, How to Help

- Avoid judgmental statements, invoking guilt
- Express support
- Share the information; don't be “painted into a corner”
- Link with additional help
- Get support for yourself!



Try to

- Be calm and matter of fact
- Listen
- Keep channels of communication open
- Ask in ways to open up discussion (i.e. “does life seem to hard at times?”, “do you ever feel like giving up?” before more direct questions
- Use the influence of a trusted treatment provider, (i.e. “What would Dr. Smith think?” or “How would your therapist Mary advise us?”



Try not to....

- Ask in a way that encourages the person to say “no” or not to feel safe to open up (i.e. “You’re not thinking of hurting yourself, are you”)
- Panic if the person admits suicidal thoughts, it’s good that they are confiding in you
- Over-emphasize the illness/the person if they seem defensive or guarded. The concern/situation involves all close to the situation
- Make promises you know you can’t keep



Levels of Suicidality

- Thoughts
- Planning/Preparation/Decision-Making
- Actions/Imminent Action

With the first two levels there is time to consult with professionals/intervene, which may help lower your anxiety level; the third level warrants 911



Resources

- Current mental health treatment providers
- Primary care physician
- Family members
- The Crisis Center 24/7
- Emergency room
- Police 911 or 301-279-8000 (non-emergency)
- Fire/Rescue



It's Really Hard to Ask!!

- Even people in helping professions may not always ask directly (i.e. police, fire/rescue medical personnel, case managers, etc.)
- It's normal to be nervous
- Asking does not put the idea in their head
- Even if the person is not suicidal, they know on some level you're concerned and that they can talk to you if it develops



Suicidal Thoughts Don't Always Require Hospitalization

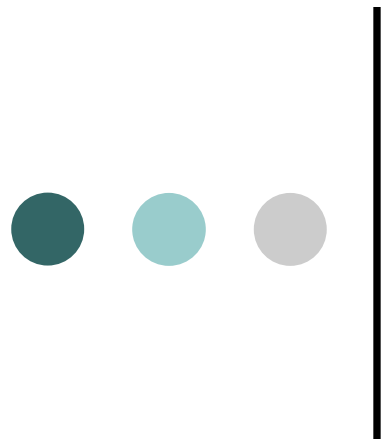
- Range of treatment interventions available
- The person may willingly accept less restrictive options
- However a home-based “suicide watch” is not recommended
- A current treatment provider should be the best guide for which interventions (hospital, crisis beds, medication, therapeutic interventions) will be most suitable for the person in the current situation



Most Important Concept!!!

Of all the sophisticated assessments and instruments the mental health profession has to offer (psychological testing, brain scans, blood work, etc., etc.) the most reliable way to find out if a person is suicidal is to

ASK DIRECTLY!!



Questions ??????