

## Youth Warning Signs and What to Do in a Crisis

When you are concerned that a person may be suicidal, look for changes in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors. This is of greatest concern if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss, or change, such as losing a friend or classmate to suicide. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.

Take any threat or talk about suicide seriously. Start by telling the person that you are concerned. Don't be afraid to ask whether she or he is considering suicide or has a plan or method in mind. Research shows that asking someone directly about suicide will not "put the idea in their head." Rather, the person in distress will often feel relieved that someone cares enough to talk about this issue with them.

Below is a list of warning signs and steps to take specifically for youth. It was developed by a consensus panel of experts in the field. See [www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org](http://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org).

| Youth Warning Signs   | What to Do  |
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| <p>Leaders in the suicide prevention field agree that the following warning signs indicate a young person may be at risk for suicide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talking about or making plans for suicide</li><li>• Expressing hopelessness about the future</li><li>• Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress</li></ul>  | <p>If you notice any of these signs in a student, take these recommended steps right away:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Do not leave the student alone and unsupervised. Make sure the student is in a secure environment supervised by caring adults until he or she can be seen by the school mental health contact.</li><li>2. Make sure the student is escorted to the school's mental health professional.</li><li>3. Provide any additional information to the school's mental health contact that will assist with the assessment of the student.</li></ol>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Withdrawal from or change in social connections or situations</li><li>○ Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)</li><li>○ Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context</li><li>○ Recent increased agitation or irritability</li></ul></li></ul> | <h3>What to Do</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ask if the student is okay or if he or she is having thoughts of suicide.</li><li>2. Express your concern about what you are observing in his or her behavior.</li><li>3. Listen attentively and nonjudgmentally.</li><li>4. Reflect what the student shares and let the student know he or she has been heard.</li><li>5. Tell the student that he or she is not alone.</li><li>6. Let the student know there are treatments available that can help.</li><li>7. If you or the student are concerned, guide him or her to additional professional help, or to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, a 24-hour toll-free phone line for people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).</li></ol> |