



Learn the Warning Signs Your Friend Might Be Struggling

In order to help protect someone from suicide, you first need to know if someone is at risk. Unfortunately, people thinking of ending their own life don't think they deserve support and are unlikely to reach out directly about their feelings. Instead, we rely on two types of cues:

1. **Intentional cues**, or vague hints a person thinking of suicide might give without directly mentioning the stigmatized issue of suicide.
2. **Unintentional cues**, or noticeable changes that suggest they're not doing well.

Intentional Cues

People who are thinking of killing themselves are suffering and in tremendous pain, so suicide may seem like the only solution or relief option. However, they may also have people or things they care about, values tying them to life, or sheer fear of death. As they struggle with this decision to live or to die, the part of them that wants to live may begin hinting that they need help.

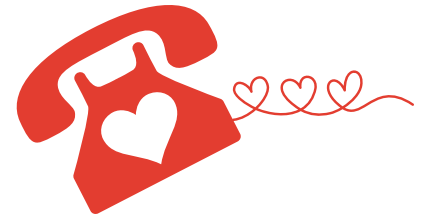
Intentional cues may be extremely clear (*such as mentioning suicide directly*), or more ambiguous. The clarity of the cues doesn't affect how serious they are; each warrants the same care and concern.

- **Talk about Killing Themselves:** might seem obvious but is often ignored or dismissed as not being serious. Someone directly confessing that they are thinking of suicide is a strong suggestion that they are at risk.
- **Very Low Self-Esteem:** People feeling suicidal express being a burden, feeling worthless, having shame, overwhelming guilt, self-hatred, "everyone would be better off without me."
- **No Hope for the Future:** People feeling suicidal often say that things will never get better and that nothing will ever change.
- **Talking About Dying:** People who are suicidal often talk about death a lot. This could also come out in art, journaling, or other ways of expression.

Important Disclaimer: This information is meant for educational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice. It is meant to support, not replace, the advice of a licensed health care or mental health care professional. It should not be used to make a diagnosis or replace or overrule a qualified health care provider's judgment.



- **Saying Goodbye:** People who are suicidal often say good-bye in strange ways. They might talk in terms of “not seeing me around anymore” or “no one would notice if I never came back.” They are hinting in the hopes that someone will stop them.
- **Tying Up Loose Ends:** Suicidal people may give away personal possessions, plan arrangements for the care of children or pets, make or revise wills, or other acts as if they are preparing to end their life. Doing this openly without a reasonable cause may mean they’re trying to communicate thoughts of suicide.



Unintentional Cues

If someone feels that life is no longer worth living, this may have some impact on their behavior. Many people will do everything in their power to conceal that they’re thinking of suicide, and the correlation between changed behavior and suicidal thoughts is only clear in hindsight.

- **Lack of Sleep:** Physical cues of exhaustion such as slouched posture, bags under eyes, and delayed reactions all suggest that someone is emotionally unwell, especially if this is a shift from a person’s baseline.
- **Drug and Alcohol Use:** Sometimes people try to self-medicate their painful feelings through substance use. A sudden shift in increased substance use may suggest that someone is dealing with remarkable pain, and increases impulsivity.
- **Sudden Isolation:** People who are considering suicide may suddenly isolate themselves from friends and family. When no one investigates, it can reinforce the idea that no one cares.
- **Any Sudden Changes in Behavior:** Ultimately, the best barometer for risk of suicide is someone who knows the person very well noticing any significant changes in behavior. In some cases, people who are suicidal become increasingly energetic and less weighted by anxiety because they feel relieved by the option of suicide. If you find yourself thinking “*This is unlike the person I care about,*” it’s worth pointing out the changes in behavior and asking about suicide.

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