

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Program

College of Charleston
Counseling and Substance Abuse Services

Mission Statement

The Suicide Awareness and Prevention Program aims to educate the faculty, staff, students and parents of the College of Charleston community about the prevalence of suicide among college aged persons, the warning signs indicating a person is at increased risk for attempting suicide, strategies for intervening with those at risk for attempting suicide and the availability of resources on and off campus, in order to reduce the risk of suicide in our community.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DISTRESS

A number of factors may contribute to the experience of distress. In general, the greater number of triggers present, the greater the risk of distress.

Academic Stressors	Anxiety
Classroom discussions	Controversial speakers/events
Depression	Eating Disorders
Family Stressors	Interpersonal Relationship Stressors
Romantic Relationship Stressors	Sexual Assault
Substance Abuse	World affairs

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*Other stressors may be present; **ASK** if anything specific is contributing to the current distress. A direct response may indicate that your effort to help is valued; an indirect response may indicate their unwillingness or inability to discuss the matter.

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

- Depression
- Little motivation to do anything
- Frequent crying
- Confusion
- Energy, none or very agitated
- Isolating oneself
- Skipping classes
- Sudden changes in eating, sleeping habits
- Neglect of personal appearance
- Displaying unusual anger (outbursts) or sadness
- Complete loss of interest in activities that once gave pleasure/meaning
- Acting out of character/personality change.
- Exaggerated mood swings
- Engaging in self-destructive or dangerous risk taking behavior
- Frequent arguments/fighting
- Increasing and/or abusive alcohol/drug use
- Giving away valued possessions
- Statements about death/dying or suicidal threats

Examples: I don't want to be here.

Nobody would miss me if I weren't here.

I want to die.

I wish I could just disappear.

I may go and never come back.

I won't be around much longer.

I don't know how much longer I can take this.

IF SOMEONE IS IN DISTRESS AND WILL NOT SEEK HELP, DO NOT LEAVE THEM ALONE. CALL FOR HELP.

On-campus, call the Office of Public Safety, 843-953-5611

Off-campus, dial 911

DO's AND DON'Ts FOR THE HELPER

DO

- Take the warning signs seriously, especially statements or threats of death or suicide.
- Express concern for person's welfare. Be specific about what behaviors concern you.
- Ask what is troubling the person. Sit and wait for a response.
- If reluctant to talk, ask again. Keep trying. Talking may not be easy.
- Listen....really listen to what is said and check out what you think you heard.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings.
- Ask directly with a calm serious tone "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" or "Have you had any thoughts about suicide?" Wait with patience in silence to allow for the person to think and answer.
- If "no" **and** you feel certain no danger exists, then offer support and suggest seeking help. Consider resources below.
- If "yes" **or** you feel some danger does exist (the student has a number of risk factors/warning signs, 'gut' feeling), have the person or yourself immediately contact a source of help.
- If reluctant or unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany the person. Stress the importance of receiving help beyond what you could provide.
- Stay with the student until a professional is involved.

DON'T

- Don't try to argue anyone out of suicide.
- Don't debate the merits or morality of suicide.
- Don't tell someone "You can't do it" as it can be viewed as a dare and elicit defiance.
- Don't agree to keep suicidal thoughts, threats, or plans secret or confidential.
- Don't leave someone alone unless you are certain there is no danger, or, a qualified person is involved
- Don't assume the person is "going thru a phase" and will "get over it."

RESOURCES

Information regarding warning signs of suicide and strategies for intervention can be found at the following websites and other resources below.

College of Charleston Counseling Center

<http://www.cofc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

http://www.sprc.org/suicide_prev_basics/index.asp

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/suicide-overview.htm>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<http://www.afsp.org/index-1.htm>

Local 24-hour Hotline—Call 211

National 24 Hour Hotline—Call 900-243-TALK

MySpace—Enter Suicide Prevention in search box

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAM IN ACTION

Some activities of the Suicide Awareness and Prevention Program are:

- Including Counseling Center information in parent and student orientation packets.
- Discussing Counseling Center services during orientation sessions.
- Training and distribution of information to Residence Life staff.
- Peer Counseling HelpLine 843-953-7411

Counseling staff are available to provide programming and training on suicide to interested classes, groups and organizations.

We are grateful to the Ithaca College Counseling Center for permission to utilize the information and other resources in this publication.