Guide for Recognizing Signs of Suicidal Behavior & How to Help

**Signs & Symptoms of Possible Suicidal Behavior**

- Statements of intent to harm self
- Social withdrawal and isolating self from usual activities and/or relationships
- Statements indicating hopelessness about future, experiencing unbearable pain, or being a burden to others
- Being “in crisis” – feeling trapped or overwhelmed; unable to get out of a bad situation. Being in a situation that feels intolerable to the person (such as losing a loved one, romantic break-up, etc.)
- Giving away possessions; making arrangements as if for long absence (i.e. pet care, finances, etc.)
- Noticeable change in mood or behaviors (such as eating, sleeping, mood swings)
- Seeking or buying means of self-harm, such as a gun or large amount of pills
- Contacting or visiting people to say goodbye
- Preoccupation with death and/or violence

**Indicators of Increased Risk of Suicide**

- Past history of suicide attempts or gestures
- Anniversary of a significant loss
- Precipitating event, such as loss of a relationship, rejection, suicide of someone important (family, friend, celebrity), extreme stress, diagnosis of a terminal disease, job loss, failure, disgrace
- Gender – males are more likely to complete suicide, while females make more attempts
- History of physical, sexual, or emotional childhood abuse
- Current or past impulsivity or reckless behavior
- Lack of support system (friends, family, mentors)
- Identifying as part of the LGBTQ community, but in particular, bisexual or transgender
- Non-suicidal self-injury
- Poverty

**What to Do If Someone You Know Is Suicidal**

- Express concern in a **private** conversation – direct questions and expression of care are helpful! Questions you could ask include:
  - How are you coping with what's been happening in your life?
  - Do you ever feel like just giving up?
  - Are you or have you ever thought about suicide before, or tried to harm yourself?
  - Have you thought about how or when you'd do it?
  - Do you have access to weapons or things that can be used as weapons to harm yourself?
- Validate/normalize (not minimize) distress – we all go through difficult times
- Let them know about resources:
  - Your county’s mental health department (have the phone number available)
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK
  - Offer to make a phone call or take them to a location such as mental health agency or the hospital emergency room
- If risk appears imminent, do not leave the person alone. Call 911 or your local emergency number. If on the OSU campus, call 541-737-7000.
- For more information, visit [www.ulifeline.com](http://www.ulifeline.com)