

# ACT<sup>®</sup> now to stop a suicide

*What to look for – and what to do – if you are concerned about someone*

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR — Check All That Apply

### Part I: Suicide Risk Questionnaire

#### Have you heard someone say:

- Life isn't worth living
- My family would be better off without me
- Next time I'll take enough pills to do the job right
- Take my (prized collection, valuables) — I don't need this stuff anymore
- I won't be around to deal with that
- You'll be sorry when I'm gone
- I won't be in your way much longer
- I just can't deal with everything — life's too hard
- Nobody understands me — nobody feels the way I do
- There's nothing I can do to make it better
- I'd be better off dead
- I feel like there is no way out

#### Have you observed:

- Getting affairs in order (paying off debts, changing a will)
- Giving away articles of either personal or monetary value
- Signs of planning a suicide such as obtaining a weapon or writing a suicide note

### Part II: Depression Risk Questionnaire

#### Have you noticed the following signs of depression:

- Depressed mood
- Change in sleeping patterns (too much/little, disturbances)
- Change in weight or appetite
- Speaking and/or moving with unusual speed or slowness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, slowed thinking or indecisiveness
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, or guilt
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

#### If depression seems possible, have you also noticed:

- Extreme anxiety, agitation, irritability or risky behavior
- Racing thoughts, excessive energy, reduced need for sleep
- Excessive drug and/or alcohol use or abuse
- Neglect of physical health
- Feelings of hopelessness or desperation

## Questionnaire Interpretation - If you checked circles under:

- Part I only: Your friend may be at risk for suicide and should seek professional help immediately.
- Part II only: Your friend may be suffering from depression and should seek further evaluation with a mental health professional or his or her primary care physician.
- Parts I and II: The suicide risk is even higher: strongly encourage your friend to seek professional help immediately.

## WHAT TO DO if you suspect someone you care about is considering suicide

### ACT<sup>®</sup>: *Acknowledge, Care and find*

#### 1. Acknowledge

- **Do take it seriously.**  
70% of all people who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.
- **Do be willing to listen.**  
Even if professional help is needed, your friend or loved one will be more willing to seek help if you have listened to him or her.

#### 2. Care

- **Do voice your concern.**  
Take the initiative to ask what is troubling your friend, co-worker, or loved one, and attempt to overcome any reluctance on their part to talk about it.
- **Do let the person know you care and understand.**  
Reassure your friend or loved one that he or she is not alone. Explain that, although powerful, suicidal feelings are temporary, depression can be treated, and problems can be solved.
- **Do ask if the person has a specific plan.**  
Ask if the person has a specific plan for committing suicide and how far he or she has gone in carrying it out. *(Note: asking about suicide does not cause a person to think about – or commit – suicide. This is a myth.)*

#### 3. Treatment

- **Do get professional help immediately.**  
Bring your friend to a local hospital emergency room or crisis center (if your friend is already in treatment, contact his or her clinician).
- OR**
- **Call 1-800-273-TALK.**  
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), is a free service available 24/7 to provide assistance during a suicidal crisis or to provide mental health information and referrals.
  - **If the person seems unwilling to accept treatment...**  
Call the police or 911 if your friend is in immediate danger.

**If for any reason you are unsure, uncomfortable, or unable to take action, find a health professional with whom to share your concerns or contact your local police.**

## What NOT to do...

- × **Don't** try to cheer the person up, or tell them to snap out of it.
- × **Don't** assume the situation will take care of itself.
- × **Don't** act shocked or surprised at what the person says.
- × **Don't** challenge or dare.
- × **Don't** argue or debate moral issues.
- × **Don't** be sworn to secrecy.
- × **Don't** risk your personal safety. If the person acts in a threatening way, just leave, and then call the police.

## Did you know that...

- × Sometimes those **contemplating suicide** talk as if they are **saying goodbye or going away forever**.
- × Although most depressed people are not suicidal, **most suicidal people are depressed**.
- × One study observed, nearly **50% of suicide** victims had a **positive blood alcohol level**.
- × **70%** of people who **commit suicide** tell someone about it in advance, and **most are not in treatment**.
- × Between **20 and 40 percent** of people **who kill themselves** have **previously attempted suicide**.
- × Those who have **made serious attempts** are at much **higher risk for actually taking their lives**.
- × **Serious depression** can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often is expressed instead as a **loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities** that were once enjoyable.