What leads to suicide?

There’s no single cause. Suicide most often occurs when stressors and health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness and despair. Depression is the most common condition associated with suicide, and it is often undiagnosed or untreated. Most people who actively manage their mental health conditions lead fulfilling lives. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance use problems, especially when unaddressed, increase risk for suicide.

Visit
Your Primary Care Provider
Psychiatric Hospital
Walk-in Clinic
Emergency Department
Urgent Care Center

Find a mental health provider
findtreatments.samhsa.gov
mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help

Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Veterans: Press 1

Crisis Text Line
Text HELLO to 741-741

CrisisChat.org
911 Call 911 for emergencies

Be a lifesaver. Learn how you can fight suicide at afsp.org.
Some People are More at Risk for Suicide than Others

Suicide Warning Signs

**TALK**
If a person talks about:
- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

**BEHAVIOR**
Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss, or change:
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for materials or means
- Withdrawing from activities
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue

**MOOD**
People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Agitation
- Rage

Assume You Are The Only One Who Will Reach Out

**HEALTH FACTORS**
- Mental health conditions
  - Depression
  - Substance use disorders
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Schizophrenia and psychosis
- Personality traits of aggression, mood changes, and poor relationships
- Conduct disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Serious or chronic health condition and/or pain
- Traumatic brain injury

**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS**
- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Prolonged stress, such as harassment, bullying, relationship problems, and unemployment
- Stressful life events which may include a death, divorce, or job loss
- Exposure to another person’s suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

**HISTORICAL FACTORS**
- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Abused as a child

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**Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life.**

**Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.**

**Historical Factors**
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**If You’re Concerned About Someone, Talk in Private**
- Listen to their story, and let them know you care.
- Ask directly about suicide, calmly and without judgment. Show understanding and take their concerns seriously. Let them know their life matters to you. That one conversation could save a life.

**Avoid**
- Debating the value of life.
- Advice to fix it.
- Minimizing the person’s feelings.

**If A Person Says They Are Thinking About Suicide**
- Take the person seriously: someone considering suicide is experiencing a life-threatening health crisis and may not believe they can be helped. Work with them to keep them safely away from lethal means like firearms and drugs and remind them that their suffering is temporary. Stay with them and call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Be sure to follow up with them after the crisis to see how they’re doing.

**If You’re Struggling**
- Don’t wait for someone to reach out. Seek mental health treatment, or tell your clinician about your suicidal thinking. Treat yourself like you would treat someone else who needs your help.