Did you know...?

♦ Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among college students.

♦ Students are likely to disclose suicidal thoughts and feelings to a friend or other trusted person.

♦ Asking about suicide will not increase the risk for suicide.

♦ There is help and hope! Early intervention with college students prevents suicide. 1

Suicidal crises are often triggered by:

• loss of relationship(s)
• a loss of a perceived goal or meaningful activity (i.e., being in academic jeopardy)

Some students are especially vulnerable to develop suicidal feelings. Individuals with psychiatric disorders like depression or anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, alcohol and substance abuse conditions, and those who are highly impulsive or aggressive are particularly susceptible. A psychiatric disorder alone, however, does not necessarily create a suicidal crisis.

When to Refer

The problems or risk factors below may precede suicide attempts. They merit evaluation, particularly when several occur together.

✔ Deteriorating functioning, including academic Functioning
✔ A recent crisis in, or loss of, a close personal relationship
✔ Persistent sadness, irritability, or emptiness
✔ Intolerable feelings of loss or personal failure
✔ Persistent difficulties falling or staying asleep
✔ Intolerable anxiety, inability to stop thinking, or severe agitation; repeated panic attacks
✔ Inability to look toward the future with some hope and optimism
✔ Thinking, talking, or writing about suicide, death, or dying
✔ Using alcohol or drugs to cope or feel better
✔ Feelings of being trapped, helpless, or desperate

When to Seek Immediate Assistance

• A student has caused serious injury to himself or herself regardless of the student’s stated intention (e.g., pill overdose, alcohol poisoning, serious self-mutilation)

• A student has threatened suicide, either verbally or in writing, or has somehow made it known that he or she wants or intends to commit suicide (e.g., through e-mail or “away messages”, or giving away prized belongings)

• A student is making plans or seeking the means for suicide (e.g., obtaining weapons, pills)

[1] Joffe, Paul “An Empirically Supported Program to Prevent Suicide Among a College Population”. Keynote Address, Current Issues in Mental Health on Campus, Syracuse, New York, April 13, 2005
How Can I Help?

Talking about suicide is uncomfortable but it’s important to do so and to remain involved. You have a role to play and we can work with you to help the student. You are not alone!

Step 1 - Ask a Question.

Express your concern about their recent behavior.

Ask the distressed student if he or she is thinking about suicide. For example, you might say...

- “Sometimes, when people are feeling so terribly, they feel hopeless and think about suicide. Have you ever had times when you felt that way?”
- “Are you feeling as if you have nothing to live for?”
- “Do you find yourself thinking a lot about death or about killing yourself?”

Use whatever words feel comfortable for you, but be clear and direct.

**Asking the question will not increase the risk for suicide.** In fact, it’s likely to reduce the risk. So, ask directly and be non-judgmental and accepting regardless of what the student says.

Step 2 - Make a Call.

If the student needs immediate assistance:
1. Preferably with the student present, **call the Counseling Center, University Police, or local emergency services.**
2. Inform them of your conversation and observations. Be specific. Of course, we make every effort to respect privacy; but remember that secrets are dangerous when a life is at risk.

   Your objective is to link the distressed Individual with professionals who can evaluate and treat suicide. The emergency services listed below have the legal authority to intervene when suicidal students steadfastly refuse evaluation and treatment. Unless your personal safety is in jeopardy, stay with the student until professional or emergency services responds.

   **If the student does not need immediate assistance:** Sometimes distressed students display risk factors but deny suicidal thoughts and feelings and have not demonstrated behaviors that require immediate attention.

   Regardless, these students need evaluation & treatment and may welcome your assistance!

   - Express your concern and encourage them to get the help they need, such as making an appointment at the Counseling Center.

Where Can I Get Help?

For Consultation and Further Evaluation:
- University Counseling Center, Clinical and Consulting Services (518-442-5800)

For Emergency Services:
- University Police Department or local police (911)
- Albany County Mobile Crisis 518-447-9650

For more information, consultation, or training on suicide prevention, contact the University Counseling Center 518-442-5800 consultation@albany.edu http://www.albany.edu/counseling_center/

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