



SEPTEMBER 2020

# CONNECT WITH EASE

*Employee Assistance Services for Education*

## MESSAGE FROM EASE

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month- a time to spread awareness, information, and resources in an effort to shed light on this often taboo and highly stigmatized topic. Mental health and wellness is too important to ignore! Suicidal thoughts can be experienced by anyone, regardless of age, gender, or background and is often the result of an ongoing mental health condition that has not been attended to. It usually involves a person in the midst of deep suffering, emotional pain, and the belief that nothing will change. Many people who find themselves in a suicide crisis can and do recover.

Suicide can be prevented. Having thoughts or plans of suicide are signs of severe emotional distress and this can be addressed if help is sought. Nobody should be suffering alone. Preventing suicide is truly a community effort that involves families, friends, co-workers, employers, organizations and whole communities working together. Our most valuable resource is each-other. We can work together in preventing suicide by prioritizing our own mental health. To show up as our best selves, it is essential to take care of our own mental health so that we can be in a position to help others.

People we encounter every day may be experiencing problems that we know nothing about. Know the signs of suicide, find the words, and reach out to someone that may be struggling. We can help others in these moments by talking openly and honestly about suicide. It's important to remember that people who are thinking about suicide often don't want to die, they just don't want to go on living with the pain. If that's the case, we need to talk about the pain. It is natural to fear saying the wrong thing or doing the wrong thing when it comes to suicide and so sometimes, we choose to do nothing. But if someone is thinking about suicide, we need to be willing to talk about it and to listen.

**You are not alone. If you are thinking about suicide or are concerned about someone else, please let someone know. Skilled and trained counselors are available 24/7 to talk, answer questions, and help you navigate this challenging situation. Help is a phone call away!**

## MONTHLY ARTICLE:

*The Importance of Suicide Prevention*

- *The Pandemic and Suicide*
- *Responding to the Risk*

## EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

### CONNECT WITH EASE:

**1-800-882-1341**

**Free confidential professional help for district employees and family members:**

Family troubles. Emotional distress. Job stress. Anxiety. Drug/alcohol use. Grief. Loss. Life transitions issues.

Professional counselors are ready to help.

**Call the EASE Hotline for 24/7 assistance.**

# The Importance of Suicide Prevention

September is **National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month** - a time to shed light on a highly stigmatized topic. As with mental illness, one of the biggest barriers in preventing suicide is stigma, which prevents people from seeking help. As the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and the second leading cause of death for people aged 10 to 34, suicide is a serious public health problem. Suicide rates have increased significantly with an estimated 1.3 million adults who attempt suicide each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than one in five people who died by suicide had expressed their suicide intent.

Although suicide is a very difficult topic to discuss, silence can have tragic results, and knowledge can save lives. For that reason, it is important to know the risk factors of suicide and to increase efforts to improve prevention. It is imperative that everyone is educated about suicide prevention - as barriers to suicide include effective methods of prevention. Suicide is preventable and knowing the risk factors and warning signs can help save a life.

## The Pandemic and Suicide Risk

We continue to live in unprecedented times and COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the lives of many individuals. A study in the journal *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, alerts practitioners to a possibly "significant mental health fall-out in the months and years ahead." As the pandemic unfolded and changes were made and measures were put in place, researchers began noting the potential for higher levels of susceptibility to extreme mental health consequences, which include suicidal ideation and attempts. Researchers determined that the risk factors which affect mental health and suicide risk levels were fears and anxieties, perceptions about the virus, social and mental health, and food insecurity. While individuals were afraid of the virus and the impact on family and community, fears were exacerbated by other factors related to things going on environmentally and socio-politically.

## Responding to the Risk

Learning and recognizing the warning signs of suicide, expressing care and concern, and assisting the person with getting professional support and help are all lifesaving steps to responding to the risk of suicide attempts. What can you do if warning signs are present? If you're in counseling with a mental health provider, we encourage you to let your provider know. If you're not currently in counseling, we encourage you to reach out for help. Connect with a professional immediately and if possible, involve a partner, parent or family member in helping you. If it is urgent, contact an emergency line. If you're concerned for a loved one, share your concern with that person, listen and validate them, and stay with that person until they are linked with help.

<https://www.suicideispreventable.org>  
<https://www.opthalmologytimes.com/view/covid-19-and-suicide-in-the-us/>  
<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/suicide-prevention>

## TALK TO US

EASE has counselors if you want to talk.  
(800) 882-1341

PAIN ISN'T ALWAYS OBVIOUS

## KNOW THE SIGNS

SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE

Although pain isn't always obvious, most suicidal people show signs that they are thinking of suicide. Some signs could appear in social media posts, through conversations or by the persons actions. Knowing the signs is important in making the difference and saving a life.

## KNOW THE SIGNS

(list is not exhaustive)

- Talking about suicide or wanting to die
- Uncontrolled anger
- Giving away possessions
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Feeling hopeless, desperate, trapped
- Withdrawal

## FIND THE WORDS

- Start the conversation
- Listen, express concern, reassure
- Create a safety plan
- Get help
- Don't ask questions that indicate you want "No" for an answer

## REACH OUT

- There are many crisis and prevention lines available to treat, assess, and intervene in a crisis situation.



**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**

Call 1.800.273.8255

Chat <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>

**Crisis Text Line:**

Text "Blue" (for law enforcement officers) to 741-741 to connect 24/7 with a trained crisis counselor

**Text "Help":**

Anyone can text "HELP" to 741-741 to be connected to crisis services