

## what to do

- Take the risk factors and signals seriously. If you think someone is considering suicide, ASK HIM OR HER “Are you suicidal?” or “Do you want to kill yourself?” If the answer is “yes,” GET HELP.
- Show interest in the person and be supportive of him or her.
- Offer hope that there are alternatives to suicide.
- Take action. Remove methods the person might use to kill him or herself.
- Seek help from his or her family, friend, physician, clergy, etc.
- IMMEDIATELY contact a person or organization that specializes in crisis intervention or suicide prevention for help. (See the back of this brochure).

## what to avoid

- Avoid acting shocked or lecturing the person on the value of life.
- Avoid taunting or daring him or her to “do it.”
- Avoid judging. Allow him or her to express his or her thoughts or feelings.
- Avoid debates over whether suicide is right or wrong.
- Avoid offering easy reassurance—it may make the person feel as if you really don’t understand or care about him or her.
- Don’t keep yours or another person’s suicidal thoughts a secret. GET HELP.

## where to get help

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call **800-273-TALK** (8255).

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will automatically connect you with a certified local crisis center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



For additional information on suicide prevention or publications contact:



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## Saving Middle-Aged Adult Lives



## Saving Middle-Aged Adult Lives in Tennessee



## the facts

For many people, middle-age adulthood, defined as the years 35-64, is the prime of their life. Dreams of advancement in their career, home ownership, and raising a family are primary goals in many people's lives. This age group, however, is also often faced with many stressful events and the possibility that many of their dreams may not come to pass.

The middle age group has the highest overall number of suicides. The suicide rate for adults aged 45-64 is more than twice that of youth aged 10-24.

### *Studies have found that:*

- Nationally, suicide is the fourth-leading cause of death within the 35-54 age group. Within Tennessee, it is the fourth-leading cause of death among men in this age group.
- Suicide rates for women peak in midlife.
- The number of adults aged 45-64 who died by suicide rose by a rate of 23% between 2004 and 2013. In contrast, the overall national suicide rate increased by about 18% during that same time period.
- Between 1999 and 2014, the death rate for non-Hispanic whites aged 45 to 54 with a high school education or less rose by 22, in stark contrast to falling rates among other U.S. age groups and races and among similar population groups in other industrialized nations. The trend was directly tied to suicide, alcoholic liver disease, and overdoses of heroin and prescription opioids.

## signals

Suicide is never caused by a single event. It is the result of many factors over a period of time. Here are some common causes of suicidal thoughts or behavior in middle-aged adults:

**LOSS OF YOUTHFUL DREAMS** can result from the realization that the perfect, ideal life will not be a reality for them.

**DEPRESSION** is most common in midlife and is a major factor in midlife suicides. It is more than just "sadness" that all people experience occasionally. It is a deeper and more long-lasting illness with feelings of hopelessness and despair. Depression can be treated successfully.

**HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS** such as substance abuse, unsafe sexual behavior, reckless spending, or self-injury behaviors are a way that some individuals cope with feelings of depression or loneliness. However, this usually magnifies the feelings from which the person is trying to escape and can lead to impulsive actions.

**DECREASED SOCIAL SUPPORT** resulting from divorce, job loss or empty-nest syndrome may make a person in this age group more susceptible to loneliness, depression, and substance abuse.

**OTHER FACTORS:** loss of child-bearing years, increased feelings of inferiority, declining physical abilities and attractiveness, feelings of stagnation, and caregiving duties for parents or older relatives.

## risk factors

There are some behaviors that signal possible suicidal thoughts or actions by an older person. Knowing these signals and taking actions may help you save someone's life. A person might be suicidal if they:

- Experience sadness or depression that will not go away.
- Become withdrawn or isolate themselves from family and friends.
- Give away prized possessions.
- Increase their use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acquire a firearm.
- Lose weight or have a decrease in appetite.
- Change their sleeping pattern.
- Are prone to accidents, especially to falls.
- Talk about or threaten suicide. (If this happens, **TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION**).

### **Remember.....**

Any one of these signals alone doesn't necessarily indicate a person is suicidal. However, several signals may be cause for concern. Signals are especially important if the person has attempted suicide in the past. Listen. Be a friend. Get professional help. *Your actions may save a life!*