

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 glib 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:

Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network



295 Plus Park Blvd., Suite 201
Nashville, TN 37217
ph: 615-297-1077 f: 615-269-5413
www.tspn.org



**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. Adults aged 30-49 are 17% more likely to be hospitalized for a suicide attempt than youth aged 15-19.

Studies have found that:

- Nationally, suicide is the fourth-leading cause of death within the 35-64 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 45-54 who died by suicide rose by a rate of 20% between 1999 and 2004, to its highest point in at least 25 years. For women 45 to 54, the rate rose by 31 percent. In contrast, the overall national suicide rate increased by about 4% during that same time period.

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!*