

Preventing youth suicide: First step is knowing the signs

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Special to the Sun



One of the red flags that a youth may be contemplating suicide is if he or she begins to show signs of withdrawing or feeling isolated.
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WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE*

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated or recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

*The more of these signs a person shows, the greater the risk. Warning signs are associated with suicide but may not be what causes a suicide.

WHAT TO DO

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)*

TAHOE-TRUCKEE, Calif. — Even with friends and family around, someone experiencing emotional pain or suicidal thoughts can feel isolated.

You may sense something is wrong, but not realize how serious it is. Warning signs — like withdrawal, depression or hopelessness — though subtle, may be present.

Trust your instincts. Find the words and reach out. By recognizing these signs, knowing how to start a conversation and where to turn for help, you have the power to make a difference — the power to save a life.

This simple message is the main premise of California's Know the Signs Campaign, a campaign initiated in 2011 to reduce instances of suicide and connect individuals with local resources.

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[The Know the Signs campaign](#)  is part of a statewide effort to prevent suicide, reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness, and promote the mental health and wellness of students.

It's intended to educate individuals on how to help prevent suicide by encouraging them to know suicide-warning signs, find the words to offer help, and reach out to local resources.

The Tahoe Truckee Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition has chosen this educational campaign as a main focus for prevention strategies.

By empowering individuals to recognize the warning signs of suicide, our community is more effective at connecting the individuals who are experiencing depression or mental illness with local resources.

While children may not be the best at verbally expressing emotions, there are common symptoms of depression that present themselves, allowing gatekeepers in a child's life to recognize emotional concerns.

• Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional

Some common symptoms include: loss of energy, insomnia, fatigue, persistent aches or pains, feelings of worthlessness, feelings of helplessness, restlessness, drug abuse, and excessive alcohol consumption.

Once signs of depression or suicidal ideation are recognized, it can be difficult to begin the conversation.

Knowing how to start a conversation is critical and addressing the issue rather than avoiding it can save a life.

By appropriately approaching the conversation and providing support, we can connect those in need with local resources.

Please [visit suicideispreventable.org to learn more about the signs](https://www.suicideispreventable.org) [↗](#), find the words, and how to reach out.

To reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline call 1-800-273-8255 and in a medical emergency always dial 911.

Sarah McClarie is the facilitator for the Tahoe Truckee Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition. Contact her at smcclarie@ttusd.org [↗](#) or by calling 530-582-2560.

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