

Worried about a Friend or Loved One?

(Adapted from questionnaire distributed as part of "National Depression Screening Day" and reproduced with their permission.)

PART 1. Suicide Risk Questionnaire

a) Have you heard ... ?

- Life isn't worth living
- My family would be better off without me
- Next time I'll take enough pills to do the job right
- Take my [prized collection, valuables], I don't need this stuff anymore
- I won't be around to deal with that
- You'll be sorry when I'm gone
- I won't be in your way much longer
- I just can't deal with everything, life's too hard
- Nobody understands me, nobody feels the way I do
- There's nothing I can do to make it better
- I'd be better off dead

b) Have you observed ... ?

- Getting affairs in order, such as paying off debts or changing a legal will?
- Giving away articles of either personal or monetary value?
- Signs of planning a suicide, such as obtaining a weapon or writing a suicide

PART 2. Depression Risk Questionnaire

a) Have you noticed the following signs of depression?

- Depressed mood
- Change in sleeping patterns (too much, too little, or disturbances)
- Change in weight or appetite
- Speaking and/or moving with unusual speed or slowness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, or guilt
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, slowed thinking or indecisiveness
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

b) If depression seems possible, have you also noticed ... ?

- Extreme anxiety, agitation, or enraged behavior
- Excessive drug and/or alcohol use or abuse
- Neglect of physical health
- Feelings of hopelessness or desperation

Did you know?

75% of people who commit suicide tell someone about it in advance.

Sometimes those contemplating suicide talk as if they are saying goodbye or going away forever.

Between 20 and 40 percent of people who kill themselves have previously attempted suicide. Those who have made serious suicide attempts are at much higher risk for actually taking their lives.

Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most suicidal people are depressed. Serious depression can be manifested in obvious sadness, but often it is expressed instead as a loss of pleasure or withdrawal from activities that had once been enjoyable.

Turn this page over to learn what your answers may mean for your friend or loved one. Also, learn what to do if you suspect that someone you care about is in trouble.

"Worried about a Friend or Loved One?" cont'd

Questionnaire Interpretation:

If you checked boxes under...

Part I only, then your friend may be at risk for **suicide** and should seek professional help immediately.

Part 2 only, then your friend may be suffering from **depression** and should seek further evaluation with a mental health professional or his or her primary care clinician

Parts I and 2, the **suicide** risk is even higher for your friend. Strongly encourage your friend to seek professional help immediately.

What to do if you suspect a friend or loved one may be suicidal:

Take it seriously. 75% percent of all people who commit suicide give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.

Be willing to listen. Even if professional help is needed, your friend or loved one will be more willing to seek help if you have listened to him or her.

Voice your concern. Take the initiative to ask what is troubling your friend or loved one and attempt to overcome any reluctance to talk about it.

Let the person know you care and understand ... Reassure your friend or loved one that he or she is not alone. Explain that, although powerful, suicidal feelings are temporary, depression can be treated, and problems can be solved.

Ask if the person has a specific plan for committing suicide and how far he or she has gone in carrying it out. (*Note: asking about suicide does not cause a person to think about or commit suicide--that is a myth.*)

Get professional help immediately. Bring your friend to a local hospital emergency room or crisis center. (If your friend is already in treatment, contact his or her clinician.) Your friend will be more likely to seek help if you accompany him or her. If all else falls, notify your local police, who are trained to handle situations like this.

Follow up on treatment. Take an active role in following up with the treatment process and medications. Be sure to notify the physician about any unexpected side effects or changes in behavior.

If for any reason, you are unsure, uncomfortable or unable to take action, find a responsible adult with whom to share your concerns or contact your local police. It is better to have an angry friend, than a dead one.

Whatever you choose to do, the important thing is to make the effort.

- Did We Help? -

If you feel you may have saved a life as a result of today's program, we would appreciate hearing your story and how the program helped.

WRITE TO: NDS, One Washington Street, Suite 304, Wellesley Hills, MA 02481.

To locate a free depression screening year-round for someone you care about,

CALL 1-800-573-4433.

- X **Don't assume the situation will take care of itself.**
- X **Don't leave the person alone.**
- X **Don't be sworn to secrecy.**
- X **Don't act shocked or surprised at what the person says.**
- X **Don't challenge or dare.**
- X **Don't argue or debate moral issues.**