

A **suicide crisis** is a time-limited occurrence signaling **immediate danger of suicide**. Most people committing suicide give some clue as to their intentions before they make an attempt. During a time of suicide crisis, the suicidal person sees suicide as the only solution to a set of overwhelming feelings or unbearable circumstances. While suicidal people often do not really wish to die, the intense emotional distress often blinds them to alternative solutions.

SIGNS TO LOOK FOR:

- **Precipitating Event:** A recent event that is particularly distressing such as **loss** of loved one, end of a relationship, or career **failure**. In considering whether a person may be suicidal, it is extremely important that the precipitating event be evaluated from that person's perspective. What may seem of minor importance could be extremely distressful and painful for the person in crisis.
- **Observable signs of serious depression:** Unrelenting low mood, pessimism, hopelessness, desperation (anguish + urgency for relief), anxiety, inner pain/tension, withdrawal, sleep problems.
- **Increased alcohol and/or other drug use.**
- **Recent impulsiveness, unnecessary risk-taking, or self-destructive behavior.**
- **Threatening suicide or expressing a strong wish to die:**

him or her to refrain from making any serious, irreversible decisions during a crisis. Talk about positive alternatives to establish hope.

- **Maintain the boundaries of your relationship;** know your limitations with respect to your role in the student's life. When you feel you have helped as much as you can, seek another option.
- **Refer the student to Student Counseling Services** (315-464-3120) and provide him/her with contact information. Offer to help the student place the call and make the appointment while you are together. Offer to accompany the student to meet with a counselor if appropriate.
- **Contact Student Counseling** (315-464-3120) to provide information.
- **If the situation is a true emergency** (involves immediate threat to personal or public safety), **or is after hours immediately contact University Police** (315-464-4000) in Syracuse or 911 in Binghamton.
- **Immediately contact the Dean of Student Affairs** (315-464-4816).

This may be indirect. Be alert to such statements as, "My family would be better off without me." Sometimes those contemplating suicide talk as if they are saying goodbye or going away.

- **Making a plan:** Giving away prized possessions; Sudden or impulsive purchase of a firearm; Obtaining other means of killing oneself such as poisons or medications; Putting affairs in order.
- **Deterioration in functioning** at work or socially.
- **Unexpected rage or anger.**

WHAT TO DO:

If a student approaches you:

- **Remain calm and listen.** Communicate an understanding and active emotional support. Reserve judgment. Do not attempt to argue anyone out of suicide. Let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone, suicidal feelings are temporary, depression can be treated, and problems can be solved. Avoid the temptation to say, "You have so much to live for," or "Your suicide will hurt your family."
- **Deal directly with the topic of suicide.** Don't be afraid to ask whether he or she is considering suicide, or even if they have a particular plan or method in mind.
- **Encourage problem solving and positive actions.** Encourage

If you are concerned about a student exhibiting warning signs but not seeking your help:

- **Contact Dean of Student Affairs** (315-464-4816) in Syracuse or the **Director of Student Affairs** in Binghamton (607-772-3532).
- **Contact Student Counseling** (315-464-3120).
- **If after hours, contact University Police** (315-464-4000).

