

**Suicide** **Risk Factors**

* Major psychiatric disorder – depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, eating disorders
* Alcohol and other substance use disorders
* Hopelessness
* Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
* History of trauma or abuse
* Some major physical illnesses
* Previous suicide attempt
* Family history of suicide
* Role failure or perceived role failure – job, family, school
* Imprisonment or impending imprisonment – other legal sanctions that may have serious effect on self-image
* Low levels of serotonin
* Chronic disease / Intense pain with little hope of relief
* Chronic sleep disturbance with or without nightmares
* Loss – deaths; exposure to suicide; job; marriage, other partner relationships, other estrangements
* Access to lethal means
* Local clusters of suicide that have a contagious influence
* Lack of social support and sense of isolation
* Stigma associated with help-seeking behavior

**Warning Signs**

* Statements of suicidal ideations, suicide plans
* Acquiring or seeking to acquire means (guns, drugs, poisons)
* Giving away important possessions; unexpectedly making a will
* Statements of purposelessness
* Statements of hopelessness and being trapped; powerless to change life situation
* Intense emotional pain – “psycheache”
* Sudden changes in mood, intense anger, anxiety
* Feelings of constant unrelenting stress
* Loneliness, isolation, lack of connection (family, friends, school, spiritual, job, etc.)
* Self-loathing, unrelenting feelings of guilt, shame, worthlessness, failure
* Disinterest in life areas that are important

**Protective Factors**

* Effective clinical care for mental, physical and substance use disorders
* Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions and support for help
* Restricted access to highly lethal means of suicide
* Strong connections to family and community support
* Support through ongoing medical and mental health care relationships
* Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution and nonviolent handling of disputes
* Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation

**How you can help!**

* Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
* Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
* Be non-judgmental. Don’t debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad.
* Don’t lecture on the value of life.
* Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
* Take any threats of suicide seriously. Don’t dare him or her to do it.
* Stay calm. Don’t act shocked. This will put distance between you.
* Seek support. Don’t be sworn to secrecy.
* Offer hope that alternatives are available.
* Take action. Remove means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
* Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

[If you are in Crisis and are in Erie County](tel:17168343131) [24 Hour: 716-834-3131](tel:17168343131)

[If you are in Crisis and NOT in Erie County](tel:18002738255) [1-800-273-TALK (8255)](tel:18002738255)