



THE USAA
EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION®



FAMILY & LIFE

**suicide
prevention**

our mission

The mission of The USAA Educational Foundation is to help consumers make informed decisions by providing information on financial management, safety concerns and significant life events.

 **Call 911**

In case of an immediate
suicide danger

table of contents

Suicide: Know The Facts.....	02
Who Is At Risk For Suicide?.....	04
Lost Hope Leads To Lost Lives.....	06
Warning Signs	08
There's A Lot You Can Do	10
Suicide Prevention In The Military	12
Suicide Still Happens	16
For More Information.....	18



suicide: know the facts

Suicide has a major impact on our society. More so than many people believe. It's important to understand the facts and factors that contribute to suicide in order to prevent it.

Consider the following:

- Suicide is the leading cause of death due to injury in the U.S. according to the American Journal of Public Health.
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death with one suicide occurring on average every 14.2 minutes.
- 50 percent more people die by suicide each year than by homicide.
- It is estimated that more than 5 million people have been directly affected by a suicide.
- Recent data puts yearly medical costs for suicide at nearly \$100 million (2005).

Sources: American Association of Suicidology (AAS), American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

A cry for help

According to many experts, most suicidal individuals don't want to die. They just want to end the pain they are experiencing. This pain, while severe, is often temporary.

By receiving expert help at this critical point in time, suicidal individuals can often overcome their pain and avoid the tragedy of suicide.



Suicidal thoughts?

THINK ABOUT THIS:

- Your problems are almost always treatable.
- You might not see it now; but there is a way out. You just have to reach out for help.
- Problems are seldom as great as they appear.

Source: American Association of Suicidology (AAS)

In case of
an immediate
suicide danger

 **Call 911**

If there's no immediate danger, but you need to speak with a trained counselor, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at **(800) 273-TALK (8255)**.

who is at risk for suicide?

THE Bottom LINE

Anyone who is experiencing severe pain—whether it's emotional, psychological, or physical—is at risk for suicide, especially if that person feels there is no other way out from their situation.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Vital Statistics Reports

Suicide doesn't discriminate

At some point in life, anyone can have thoughts of suicide. But whether or not someone acts on these thoughts is determined by many factors.

Men & women

Men are almost four times more likely to die by suicide than women. However, women attempt suicide three times more often than men.

Young individuals & seniors

Young people aged 10 to 14 have the highest rates of attempted suicide. Seniors aged 80 or older have the highest rates of completed suicide.

Every race

Although Caucasian and Native American males are more likely to die by suicide than Americans of other racial backgrounds, all racial and ethnic groups experience suicide.

Recognize the risk factors

There are no simple answers to suicide because there are so many factors that contribute to it. By recognizing and understanding these factors, however, you can get the care you or someone you know desperately needs.

These risk factors may or may not be direct suicide causes:

- Family history of suicide.
- Family history of childhood abuse or neglect.
- Previous suicide attempt(s).
- History of mental disorders, particularly clinical depression.
- History of alcohol and substance abuse.
- Feelings of hopelessness.
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies.
- Cultural and religious beliefs (for example, belief that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma).
- Local epidemics of suicide.
- Isolation, a feeling of being cut off from other people.
- Little or no access to mental health treatment.
- Loss (relational, social, work, or financial).
- Physical illness.
- Easy access to lethal methods.
- Unwillingness to seek help.

lost hope leads to lost lives



What to watch for

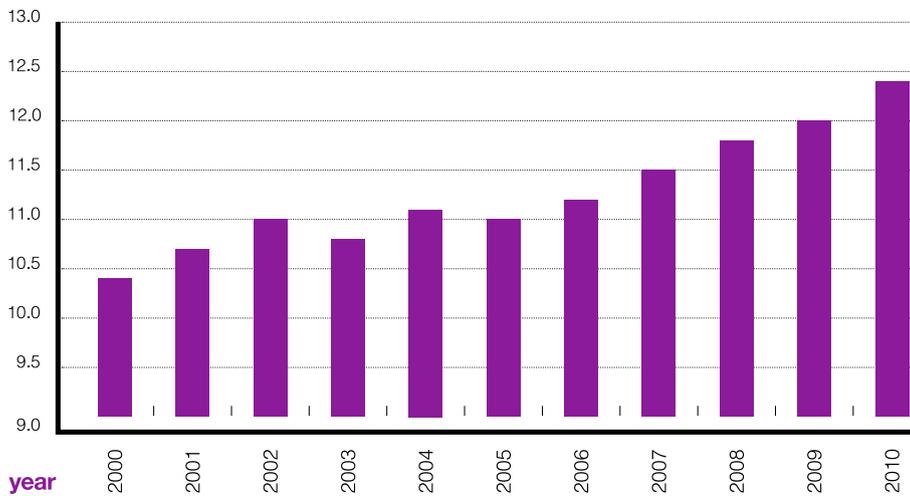
A person doesn't become suicidal overnight. The factors that lead to suicide happen over a period of time and often involve major life events.

THESE INCLUDE:

- A recent traumatic event, such as the death of a loved one, divorce or breakup, or lost custody of children.
- Repeated exposure to pain, injury and death.
- Chronic physical pain or a terminal illness.
- Acute stress from financial difficulties, ongoing job loss or difficult relationships.
- If an individual also has easy access to firearms, potentially lethal medications or other means of enacting suicide, the risk of suicide increases.

Source: American Association of Suicidology (AAS) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

Suicide Rates continue to climb



■ Rate per 100k

Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention afsp.org

Behavioral changes

Friends and family of a suicide victim often say they had no indication that person was suicidal. There are signs—noticeable changes in behavior—that a person may be considering suicide.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE BEHAVIORAL CHANGES TO LOOK FOR:

- Declining performance in school, work or other activities.
- Deteriorating physical appearance.
- Self-starvation or disobeying medical instructions (particularly among the elderly).
- Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order.
- Social isolation.
- Saying goodbye, as if for the last time.

a deadly trio of factors

What drives some — and not others — to end their own lives? Current research suggests that an individual dies by suicide when three mindsets occur simultaneously.

- ① **Having the belief of being a burden to others — the idea that those you care about will benefit more from your death than your life.**

- ② **Having a deep sense of loneliness, alienation and isolation.**

- ③ **Having a fearlessness about pain, injury and death that allows you to overcome the natural inclination to protect yourself.**

warning signs:

remember i.s. p.a.t.h. w.a.r.m.?

Almost all suicides are preceded by warning signs. It's important to learn them. More importantly, it's critical to take them seriously when they occur and be prepared to respond immediately.

Clinical researchers, in cooperation with the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), developed the "IS PATH WARM?" phrase as a tool for remembering suicide warning signs.

THESE ARE SIGNS OF ACUTE RISK.

 **Call 911**

or **(800) 273-TALK**
(8255)

Ideation

- Threatening to commit suicide.
- Talking about ending one's life.
- Looking for ways to die.

Substance abuse

- Using alcohol or drugs excessively or more than usual.
- Being intoxicated can make someone more likely to act on suicidal thoughts.



Purposelessness

- Feeling there is no reason to live.
- Being overwhelmed with a sense of personal failure or worthlessness.



Anxiety

- Feeling agitated, worried or restless.
- Being unable to sleep or sleeping all the time.



Trapped

- Feeling there is no way out of current situation.
- Feeling completely unable to reduce physical or emotional suffering.



Hopelessness

- Having no positive feelings about self, others or the future.
- Believing no one can help with a particular event or problem.



Withdrawal

- Pulling away from friendships, family and other social connections.
- Being uncommunicative, especially if this is unusual.



Anger

- Exhibiting rage or uncontrolled hostility.
- Seeking revenge for perceived wrongs.



Recklessness

- Acting reckless without regard to consequences.
- Engaging in risky behavior, especially if this is out of character.



Mood changes

- Having mood swings, especially if they include extreme feelings of hopelessness, despair and self-doubt.
- Becoming unusually sad, apathetic or irritable.
- Being suddenly and unusually calm. This may indicate a decision to act.



there's a lot
you can do

Noticing the warning signs of suicide is the first step in preventing suicide. First and foremost, you have to take anyone's talk about suicide seriously, and then be prepared to take swift and direct action.

Critical steps to consider:

NEVER PROMISE CONFIDENTIALITY

Keeping a secret keeps someone from getting the professional help they need.

- Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, (800) 273-TALK (8255).
- Accompany the individual to a local emergency room or community mental health center.
- Contact the individual's physician or mental health provider.

TAKE THE THREAT SERIOUSLY

- Don't try to handle the crisis on your own. Call 911, (800) 273-TALK (8255), the individual's physician, or others who are trained to help.
- Listen. Let the individual relieve anguish by talking. Be understanding.
- Don't leave the person alone. If possible, stay nearby until you are sure the individual is receiving professional care.

When you notice suicidal warning signs, talk to that person

- Ask direct questions. For instance, “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” If the individual has a plan and the means to carry it out, call 911 immediately.
- Share your concerns. Remain calm. Gently mention behaviors that worry you.
- Listen. The individual will be more willing to accept your help and seek professional advice.
- Help overcome guilt. The individual may feel ashamed of wanting to die. Point out that many individuals experience similar thoughts. The important thing is getting help for painful and hopeless feelings.
- Let that person know that they are important to you and others. Provide specific examples of how the individual makes your own life better.
- Do not take personal responsibility. You cannot make a suicidal individual well, but you can help that person receive and continue treatment.
- Provide ongoing support. When an individual has shared with you that they are getting professional help for suicidal thoughts, talk to them regularly. Suicidal individuals sometimes discontinue treatment after early visits with a health professional. Your support may encourage them to continue.



Help a co-worker

It takes special courage to help someone you work with. Talking about your concerns may feel awkward. However, you may be a co-worker's or employee's only source of help.

- Get to know those you work with. The better you know one another, the better you can help if problems arise.
- Be observant. Pay attention to warning signs such as increased absenteeism, decreased productivity or lost interest or pride in work.
- Take appropriate steps. Take time to understand and follow your company's protocol for handling sensitive issues at work. Be respectful and mindful of the individual's privacy and health information. If an individual confides in you that they are contemplating suicide, report this information to your leadership at once.
- Refer the individual to the employee benefit program such as your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) office or other appropriate source of help.

suicide prevention in the military

THE Bottom LINE

According to the Department of Defense (DoD), in 2012, 349 servicemembers took their own lives. That's one suicide death every 25 hours. The Army sustained the greatest number of suicides at 182.

A growing problem

In 2012, suicide in the military hit an all-time high, according to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). In fact, in the Army, more soldiers died from suicide than were killed in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Many factors. one tragic result.

Servicemembers have to deal with many unique, and often difficult, situations — situations that most non-military personnel could never imagine. Because of this, servicemembers are often exposed to the types of feelings and issues that may lead them to thoughts of suicide.

Common contributing factors

- Multiple relocations, separation from family and the demanding nature of military service. Servicemembers can experience a lifetime of stress during a few years of service.
- Being more susceptible to medical issues highly associated with suicide, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
 - PTSD is a type of anxiety disorder that is triggered by a traumatic event.
 - Without medical treatment, PTSD increases the risk of suicidal thoughts and actions. Symptoms include:
 - + Recurring flashbacks or nightmares of the event.
 - + Avoidance (to the point of phobia) of any reminder of the event.
 - + Chronic sleep problems, feeling on edge and other signs of hyperarousal.
- Fearing being perceived negatively for seeking mental health treatment.
- Treatment may include reintegration, socialization, medication and psychotherapy.

The **A.C.E.** formula

Military suicide prevention requires leadership

Preventing suicide in the military starts at the top; with caring and decisive leadership. Military leaders must communicate to personnel that seeking help is a sign of strength. It's a courageous and honorable thing to do. More and more, military leaders are being trained to recognize the warning signs of suicide and being instructed on how to take preventive action. Servicemembers too are encouraged to become informed and take action whenever it's needed.

STEPS SERVICEMEMBERS CAN TAKE:

- Form relationships. Get to know those around you. Be able to recognize when they are suffering.
- Be informed about suicide. Learn the risk factors, contributing factors and warning signs of suicidal thoughts and actions. Take steps to inform others.
- Discourage high-risk behaviors that can lead to suicide. Recent studies show increased use of alcohol, amphetamines and narcotics among some servicemembers. This dangerous trend can contribute to suicidal thoughts.
- Create awareness. Stigma is the biggest deterrent to seeking appropriate treatment. Tell others that seeking help (for any problem) is an important part of fitness and readiness. Getting help shows self-awareness and a desire to achieve your best.
- Encourage at-risk individuals to get help. Early diagnosis and treatment are extremely important.

Ask :



- Have the courage to ask, "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"
 - Stay calm.
-

Care :



- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury.
 - Calmly control the situation. Do not use force.
 - Actively listen to produce relief.
-

Escort :



- Avoid leaving a suicidal individual alone, but be alert to your own safety.
- Escort the individual to the chain of command, a chaplain, a behavioral health professional or primary care provider.

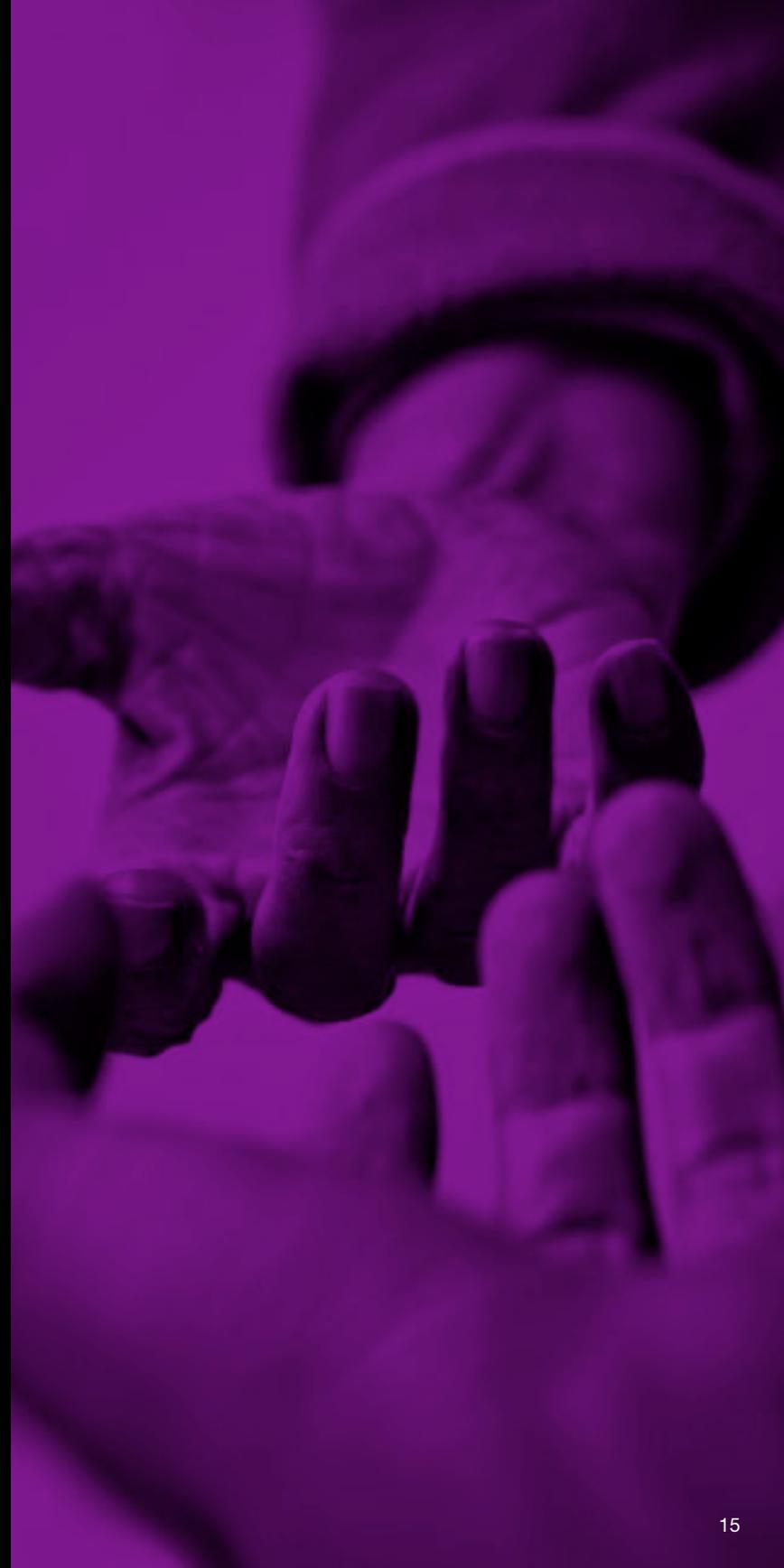
Based on the U.S. Army's and the U.S. Air Force's Suicide Intervention Programs.

Get help

The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their loved ones with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. **Call (800) 273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.**

SERVICEMEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES MAY ALSO CONTACT:

- A local military or mental health clinic.
- Military OneSource Crisis Intervention Line at (800) 342-9647.
- Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) at (866) 966-1020.
- Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline at (800) 984-8523.





suicide still happens

Unfortunately, not everyone will be saved from committing suicide. If you lose someone to suicide, your grief process will be intense, complex and lengthy. Feelings of denial, anger and guilt are much stronger when a loved one dies by suicide than when one is lost to illness or accident.

What to expect

As you grieve, you'll likely experience many emotions. While these are natural, they may interfere with your ability to resolve grief.

- Overwhelming anger, guilt, confusion, sadness and forgetfulness, as well as physical aches and pains or trouble eating and sleeping.
- Persistent memories or dreams about the suicide.
- Fear or anxiety over simple activities, such as taking a shower, being in the dark or opening a closed door.
- Intense guilt over past actions or words — even guilt for surviving. You may relive past arguments or conflicts.
- Repressed acceptance of the suicide. You may attempt to rationalize that the death was an accident or even murder.
- Shame or embarrassment that keeps you from seeking necessary help and support.
- Feeling you could have prevented the suicide.
- Blaming yourself for missing warning signs of your loved one's intentions.
- Imagining you were responsible for your loved one's actions.
- Worrying that others blame you for the suicide.
- A sudden resurgence of these symptoms when you hear of another suicide.
- When family and friends suffer the grief and trauma of losing someone they care about to suicide, they become more likely to kill themselves.

The healing process

Overcoming the pain of loss that results from a suicide is a lengthy process. But things can, and often do, get better.

WHEN COPING WITH THE COMPLEX EMOTIONAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS SURROUNDING SUICIDE, TRY TO RESPOND IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- Acknowledge that your loved one died by suicide.
- Accept that your loved one — and no one else — was responsible for choosing suicide.
- Talk or write about your loved one's death to help break a cycle of obsessive thoughts.
- Consult a physician if anxiety interrupts your normal routine for a prolonged period.
- If guilt persists, it may help to consult a clergy member, support group, counselor or therapist.
- Learn as much as you can about suicide and its causes.
- Reach out to others who have lost a loved one to suicide. Join a support group or start one if there are none in your area.
- Stay in touch with family and friends during the stress-filled weeks and months following the suicide.

Grief is a natural, necessary and healthy response to the loss of a loved one, but it is not just a feeling. It is the difficult process of facing your loss, accepting it and choosing to enjoy life again. Expect emotional and physical symptoms to come and go throughout this period. Over time, the intensity and frequency of your anguish will diminish and you will recover.



for more information

Learn the signs, **save a life.**

According to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (sprc.org), there are more suicide deaths each year than homicides. What's more, there are an estimated dozen attempted suicides for every suicide death. Knowing how to recognize the warning signs and respond to those at risk could save the life of a loved one, friend or co-worker.

MORE SUICIDE PREVENTION SOURCES

American Association of Suicidology (AAS)

(202) 237-2280 suicidology.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

(888) 333-AFSP (2377) afsp.org

Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE)

(866) 966-1020

Military One Source Crisis Intervention Line

(800) 342-9647

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

(866) 615-6464 nimh.nih.gov

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-TALK (8255)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

(877) GET-SPRC (438-7772) sprc.org

Wounded Warrior and Family Hotline

(800) 984-8523

access more free educational materials today



THE USAA
EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION®

can help you look out for the best interests of your family or an organization with free educational information.

Children With Special Needs

Managing Credit And Debt

Protecting The Elderly
From Fraud And Abuse

Your Job Search

Marriage And Money

Dealing With Divorce

When A Loved One Dies:
Legal And Financial Concerns

When A Loved One Dies:
Coping With Grief

Families Dealing
With Deployment

Life After The Military

Planning Your PCS

Visit usaaedfoundation.org to download digital versions or to order up to 250 printed copies of select publications or videos. Please call **(800) 531-6196** if you would like more than 250 copies. There is no charge for shipping. Some titles are not available in print.



THE USAA
EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION®

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

usaaedfoundation.org



THE USAA
EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION®

This publication is not intended to be, and is not medical, safety, legal, tax or investment advice. It is only a general overview of the subject presented. The USAA Educational Foundation, a nonprofit organization, does not provide professional services for financial, accounting or legal matters. Applicable laws are complex, the penalties for non-compliance may be severe, and the applicable law of your state may differ. Consult your tax and legal advisers regarding your specific situation.

The USAA Educational Foundation does not endorse or promote any commercial supplier, product, or service. The Department of Defense, its military branches (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard) and other governmental agencies do not endorse or favor any of the information, products or services contained in this publication.

USAA is the sponsor of The USAA Educational Foundation. The USAA Educational Foundation www.usaaedfoundation.org is a registered trademark. The USAA Educational Foundation 2013. All rights reserved.

70581-0613

