

Greetings Falcons,

Suicide is an uncomfortable topic to discuss but one that should be addressed openly and honestly. To help raise awareness and open the dialogue, September is recognized as National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.

Suicide is a difficult topic, but silence can have tragic results. While a suicidal person may not directly ask for help, that doesn't necessarily mean they don't want help. So, what can someone do to help?

### Recognizing warning signs

An important part – the first step actually – of suicide prevention is recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously, and then knowing how to respond to them. Warning signs of suicide include:

- Talking about suicide.
- Looking for access to guns, pills, knives, etc.
- Having a preoccupation with death.
- Sudden mood swings or personality changes.
- Hopelessness.
- Self-loathing/hatred.
- Neglecting appearance.
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns.
- Saying goodbye.
- Withdrawal.
- Self-destructive behavior.

### Important tips

1. If you're worried about someone, speak up and start a conversation. Giving a suicidal person the opportunity to share their feelings can provide relief.
  - Start a conversation with a simple statement that reflects the concerns. For example, "You haven't seemed like yourself lately, so I wanted to check in," or, "How are you doing? I've noticed some changes in you and want to be sure you're OK."
  - Remind them that they are not alone and that you are in their corner. Let them know the way they are feeling now will change and that you care about them and want them to be OK.
2. Respond quickly. It's important to try to determine if the individual is in immediate danger.

It's important to pay attention and take them seriously, even if you do not think that the person you're trying to help is in immediate danger.

3. Offer help and support. Trying to help someone who is suicidal can be emotionally challenging. While trying to offer support, remember not to put the responsibility on yourself for making the individual better. You can offer support, but only the individual in question can make the decision to get help and stick to ongoing treatment and therapy.

Some things to do to offer support:

- Be proactive regarding reaching out. Don't wait for the person to call or ask for help.
- Help them find a trusted adult or mental health professional for them to talk to.
- Provide them with a suicide prevention crisis phone number: **1-800-273-8255** or **916-368-3111**
- Encourage lifestyle changes that will positively affect the individual. Things such as a healthy diet, getting plenty of sleep, getting outside and so on.
- Continue supporting the individual long-term. Keep in touch, periodically stop by to visit, call to check in and remind the individual that there is hope.

There are many ways to get and stay involved. Share information about suicide and suicide prevention on social media to help reduce the stigma associated with it. Keep the dialogue going with family and friends about the need for increased awareness and support. Volunteer at a local crisis shelter or similar organization. But most importantly, practice self-care, pay attention to your mental health needs, ask for help when you need it, and keep an eye out for each other.

This week's affirmation:

I am more than my thoughts and I have value in this world.

For more information on suicide prevention or to discuss the topic further, contact Mrs. Patterson or I in the Counseling Department.

Happy Wellness Wednesday.

Take care and be well,  
Ms. McDougall