



# Family Service Agency of the Central Coast

Serving Monterey, Santa Cruz, & San Benito Counties

## Suicide Prevention Service

### Suicide Warning Signs

**If you or someone you know is experiencing any of the signs listed below, please call us immediately—even if you're not sure.**

***24 hour toll-free Suicide Crisis Line  
(877) ONE-LIFE / (877) 663-5433  
Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties  
(831) 458-5300 in Santa Cruz County***

While some suicides occur without warning, most people who die of suicide show two or more of the following warning signs within two months of their death.

#### **Statements or threats of suicide (direct or hinting)**

This may seem obvious but these comments are oftentimes ignored. People may think threats of suicide are bids for attention. It is important to take these statements seriously because people who talk about suicide are asking for someone to listen and help.

#### **Preoccupation with death and/or hopelessness**

Suicidal people may talk about death more than usual, may make statements like “I wish I were dead” or “this would be so much easier if I was gone.” This may also come out in art, decorations, or journaling.

#### **Drug and alcohol use**

One half of people who kill themselves are intoxicated at the time of their death. This risk increases to 80% among teens and young adults under age 25.

#### **Giving away prized possessions**

In preparation for their death, some people give away pets, family heirlooms, and other important possessions to family and friends.

#### **Saying goodbye**

Many people make amends and say their goodbyes to family, friends, and loved ones.

#### **Increased isolation**

When people feel suicidal, they often isolate themselves—not returning phone calls, going out, being social, or participating in activities they used to enjoy.

### **Extreme changes in:**

- Mood—increased hopelessness, anxiety, anger, or the sense of being overwhelmed
- Personality—the person seems different or withdrawn
- Activity level—obvious decrease or increase in activity
- Appetite—eating too much or too little
- Sleep patterns—sleeping too much or too little

### **Physical health complaints**

Emotional distress can show up in bodily complaints. People who are very stressed or suicidal may experience headaches, lack of sleep or appetite, muscle aches, joint issues, back pain, stomach problems, and other physical conditions.

### **Self injury (unexplained cuts/burns, frequent “accidents”, etc.)**

Self-injury by itself is usually not a suicide attempt. It is, however, a sign that someone is going through a lot of emotional pain and needs some help and support. Suicidal thoughts may or may not be present. As with suicide, there is a lot of shame and fear of being rejected or thought “crazy” around self-harm. It is very important to be open, supportive, and willing to ask and talk about self-harm with the person in a nonjudgmental way.

### **Sudden Mood Elevation**

This warning sign is difficult to recognize as it may appear that the person of concern is feeling better and coming out of a crisis. In fact, the opposite may be true. People who suddenly become happy after feeling sad and isolated are at higher risk for suicide. It is easier to prepare for and carry out a suicide plan when a person has more energy.

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