**Suicides are sky-rocketing America.**

Most people have been hearing about rising suicide rates in America, and among veterans, suicides are acknowledged as a very serious issue.

In 2022, 49, 500 Americans took their own lives. This suicide rate increased by 3% from 2021. What has changed in our lives that causes so many people to say good-bye forever? While guns are often used in suicides, guns cannot be blamed for those who suicide.

Those who suicide will take their own lives even if guns were not available.

Why are so many Americans committing suicide? Stress, not surprisingly, is the major factor in suicides. Everyone lives with stress, so what else leads thousands of people to take their own lives. Excessive stress that leads to serious mental disruption is the pathway to suicide. When excessive pressure seriously impacts a person’s mind, they must seek medical help. Anyone suffering serious stress that affects our mental functions should seek immediate help. Drugs or alcohol use can accelerate suicides.

Here in America, **call, or text 988** to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or use the Lifeline Chat at 988lifeline.org/chat/. Services are free and confidential.

**For a U.S. veteran or service member in crisis**, call 988 and then press 1, or text 838255. Or chat using veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat/.

The Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. has a Spanish language phone line at 1-888-628-9454.

Call 911 in the U.S. or your local emergency number immediately.

There are many reasons why modern life puts excessive stress on everyone, and there is no easy way to avoid stress. When the stress impacts our mind, and it threatens our mental processes, medical help must be sought quickly.

**Without competent medical service and support, the results can be deadly suicide.**

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**Suicide, taking your own life, is a tragic reaction to stressful life situations** — and all the more tragic because **suicide can be prevented**. Whether you're considering suicide or know someone who feels suicidal, learn suicide warning signs and how to reach out for immediate help and professional treatment. You may save a life — your own or someone else's.

It may seem like there's no way to solve your problems and that suicide is the only way to end the pain. But you can take steps to stay safe — and start enjoying your life again.

**For immediate help**

If you're feeling overwhelmed by thoughts of not wanting to live or you're having urges to attempt suicide, get help now.

**Call a suicide hotline.**

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Talking about suicide — for example, making statements such as "I'm going to kill myself," "I wish I were dead" or "I wish I hadn't been born"

Getting the means to take your own life, such as buying a gun or stockpiling pills

Withdrawing from social contact and wanting to be left alone

Having mood swings, such as being emotionally high one day and deeply discouraged the next

Being preoccupied with death, dying or violence

Feeling trapped or hopeless about a situation

Increasing use of alcohol or drugs

Changing normal routine, including eating or sleeping patterns

Doing risky or self-destructive things, such as using drugs or driving recklessly

Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order when there's no other logical explanation for doing this

Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again

Developing personality changes or being severely anxious or agitated, particularly when experiencing some of the warning signs listed above

Warning signs aren't always obvious, and they may vary from person to person. Some people make their intentions clear, while others keep suicidal thoughts and feelings secret.

**When to see a doctor**

If you're feeling suicidal, but you aren't immediately thinking of hurting yourself:

Reach out to a close friend or loved one — even though it may be hard to talk about your feelings

**Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone in your faith community**

**Call a suicide hotline**

Make an appointment with your doctor, other health care provider or a mental health professional

Suicidal thinking doesn't get better on its own — so get help.

Request an appointment

Causes

Suicidal thoughts have many causes. Most often, suicidal thoughts are the result of feeling like you can't cope when you're faced with what seems to be an overwhelming life situation. If you don't have hope for the future, you may mistakenly think suicide is a solution. You may experience a sort of tunnel vision, where in the middle of a crisis you believe suicide is the only way out.

There also may be a genetic link to suicide. People who complete suicide or who have suicidal thoughts or behavior are more likely to have a family history of suicide.

**Risk factors**

Although attempted suicide is more frequent for women, men are more likely than women to complete suicide because they typically use more-lethal methods, such as a firearm.

You may be at risk of suicide if you:

Attempted suicide before

Feel hopeless, worthless, agitated, socially isolated or lonely

Experience a stressful life event, such as the loss of a loved one, military service, a breakup, or financial or legal problems

Have a substance abuse problem — alcohol and drug abuse can worsen thoughts of suicide and make you feel reckless or impulsive enough to act on your thoughts

Have suicidal thoughts and have access to firearms in your home

Have an underlying psychiatric disorder, such as major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or bipolar disorder

Have a family history of mental disorders, substance abuse, suicide, or violence, including physical or sexual abuse

Have a medical condition that can be linked to depression and suicidal thinking, such as chronic disease, chronic pain or terminal illness

Are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender with an unsupportive family or in a hostile environment

Children and teenagers

Suicide in children and teenagers can follow stressful life events. What a young person sees as serious and insurmountable may seem minor to an adult — such as problems in school or the loss of a friendship. In some cases, a child or teen may feel suicidal due to certain life circumstances that he or she may not want to talk about, such as:

Having a psychiatric disorder, including depression

Loss or conflict with close friends or family members

History of physical or sexual abuse

Problems with alcohol or drugs

Physical or medical issues, for example, becoming pregnant or having a sexually transmitted infection

Being the victim of bullying

Being uncertain of sexual orientation

Reading or hearing an account of suicide or knowing a peer who died by suicide

If you have concerns about a friend or family member, asking about suicidal thoughts and intentions is the best way to identify risk.

Murder and suicide

In rare cases, people who are suicidal are at risk of killing others and then themselves. Known as a homicide-suicide or murder-suicide, some risk factors include:

History of conflict with a spouse or romantic partner

Current family legal or financial problems

History of mental health problems, particularly depression

Alcohol or drug abuse

Having access to a firearm

Starting antidepressants and increased suicide risk

Most antidepressants are generally safe, but the Food and Drug Administration requires that all antidepressants carry black box warnings, the strictest warnings for prescriptions. In some cases, children, teenagers and young adults under 25 may have an increase in suicidal thoughts or behavior when taking antidepressants, especially in the first few weeks after starting or when the dose is changed.

However, keep in mind that antidepressants are more likely to reduce suicide risk in the long run by improving mood.

**Complications**

Suicidal thoughts and attempted suicide take an emotional toll. For instance, you may be so consumed by suicidal thoughts that you can't function in your daily life. And while many attempted suicides are impulsive acts during a moment of crisis, they can leave you with permanent serious or severe injuries, such as organ failure or brain damage.

For those left behind after a suicide — people known as survivors of suicide — grief, anger, depression and guilt are common.

**Prevention**

To help keep yourself from feeling suicidal:

Get the treatment you need. If you don't treat the underlying cause, your suicidal thoughts are likely to return. You may feel embarrassed to seek treatment for mental health problems, but getting the right treatment for depression, substance misuse or another underlying problem will make you feel better about life — and help keep you safe.

Establish your support network. It may be hard to talk about suicidal feelings, and your friends and family may not fully understand why you feel the way you do. Reach out anyway, and make sure the people who care about you know what's going on and are there when you need them. You may also want to get help from your place of worship, support groups or other community resources. Feeling connected and supported can help reduce suicide risk.

Remember, suicidal feelings are temporary. If you feel hopeless or that life's not worth living anymore, remember that treatment can help you regain your perspective — and life will get better. Take one step at a time and don't act impulsively.