



## Behavior, situations may offer clues to suicidal thoughts

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Over the course of the last few weeks, we've discussed the facts behind suicide and ways that you can ask the all-important question, "Are you suicidal?" It is important to directly ask a friend, co-worker, family member or anyone else you know this question to learn about their state of mind and true intentions.

You also may observe behavioral clues that the person has begun displaying or situational clues that have happened to the individual.

Some behavioral clues that individuals who are suicidal may display include, but are not limited to:

- Acquiring a gun or stockpiling pills
- Putting personal affairs in order
- Giving away prized possession
- Having a sudden interest or disinterest in religion
- Drug or alcohol abuse or a relapse after a period of recovery
- Unexplained anger, aggression and irritability

Situational clues can consist of:

- Loss of a job or expulsion from school
- A recent unwanted move
- Loss of any major relationship
- Death of a spouse, child or best friend, especially if by suicide
- Diagnosis of a serious or terminal illness
- Sudden unexpected loss of freedom/fear of punishment
- Anticipated loss of financial security
- Loss of a cherished therapist, counselor or teacher
- Fear of becoming a burden to others

Additional clues may include any previous suicide attempts or co-occurring depression, moodiness or hopelessness. Behavioral clues may be harder to pick up on as you will have to have a history of knowing the person versus witnessing the above situational changes.

What happens next once you've asked the person if he is suicidal and he says "yes" or you have noticed some changes in his behavior or life? The next step is to persuade the person to seek help, whether it is by talking with a family member, a friend, a church pastor, a mental health professional or anyone with whom the person is comfortable.

First and foremost, you want to assure the person that you have his best interest at stake and you want him to stay alive. Be sure to listen to the problem and give the person your full attention. Do not rush to judgment. Offer hope in any form and remember that suicide is not the problem, only the solution to a perceived insoluble problem.

You'll want to be direct with the person once you decide to persuade him to get help. Start by asking some of these questions:

- "Will you go with me to get help?"
- "Will you let me help you get help?"
- "Will you promise me that you will not kill yourself and that you will stay safe until we find help?"

Providing a safe, kind and gentle support system for a person in need makes all the difference. You can help save a life if you are willing to

dedicate time and effort to offering hope and help to a person who cannot find these things on his own.

Next week we'll talk about ways you can help an individual in taking the next step toward help.

These articles are an abbreviated version of an educational course that is offered free to our community called QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer). At the end of this series, we'll be offering a free QPR community workshop that goes into more depth about suicide, and we hope that you'll walk away feeling that you could help save a life. This workshop on May 25 will be in the Welborn Room at 410 Mulberry St. in Downtown Evansville, from 6 to 7 p.m. Please call (812) 436-4221 to register to attend.

Please seek help if you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide. Local help is available and ready to assist in your time of need.

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