



Tips, facts can help with suicide prevention

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Some individuals believe that the highest rate of suicide occurs in the winter months surrounding the holidays from November to January.

In fact, the suicide data released by the Vanderburgh County Coroner's Office shows that the highest months of suicide in 2010 were in the months of June to October.

What can you do to help prevent a suicide?

Three steps, Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR), which have been developed by the QPR Institute, can help guide you on where to start in your process of getting help for an individual.

First, it is important to provide important facts regarding suicide:

- More than 90 percent of all people who die by suicide are suffering a major psychiatric illness.
- Firearms are used in more than half of all completed suicides.
- Suicide rates are highest among Americans 45-54 years old.
- Males are four times more likely to die by suicide than females.

The institute also notes that there are several "myths" surrounding suicide and a person's potential suicidal behavior that should be addressed:

- **Myth:** Confronting a person about suicide will only make them angry and increase the risk of suicide.
- **Fact:** Asking someone directly about suicidal intent lowers anxiety, opens up communication and lowers the risk of an impulsive act.
- **Myth:** Suicidal people keep their plans to themselves.
- **Fact:** Most suicidal people communicate their intent sometime during the week preceding their attempts.

- **Myth:** Once a person decides to complete suicide, there is nothing anyone can do to stop them.
- **Fact:** Suicide is the most preventable kind of death, and almost any positive action may save a life.

Now it is time to ask yourself, "How can I help?" The answer: Ask the question. If you have identified a person who you think has taken a sudden disinterest in activities, has had a recent life-changing experience such as a death in the family or a job loss, has become addicted to drugs or has been giving you verbal clues such as "I don't want to live" or "You'd be better off without me", then now is the time for you to have a private conversation with the person and ask if he or she is thinking of suicide.

The following are tips on how to ask the question:

- If in doubt, don't wait, ask the question.
- If the person is reluctant, be persistent.
- Talk to the person alone in a private setting.
- Allow the person to talk freely, and give yourself plenty of time.
- Have your resources handy such as phone numbers, counselor's name and any other information that might help and remember.

How you ask the question is less important than that you ask it.

Once you've had the opportunity to ask the person the question and he says he is thinking of or has thought of suicide, you want to persuade that person to get help. Even if a person says that she isn't suicidal, you want to continue to check on her periodically to make sure

she truly is doing OK or suggest ways that you can help her get through the current difficulties.

Persuading an individual to get help can be the hardest part of this process. Some individuals may not know what will happen now that they have confided in you, or the individual may be afraid that others, such as his family, friends or place of employment, will find out about his illness.

One thing you can do for the person is to ask him who else you can involve so that others can be there to support the individual besides yourself. The most important thing is to let the person know that you are willing to be there and help her find treatment and that you do care and want the individual to live.

You can say things to the person that include, "Will you go with me to get help?" or "Will you let me help you get help?" Your willingness to be there for the person can make all the difference in the world to him and his ability to recover.

The last step in the process, refer, is the point where you take action and help the individual find treatment that will best meet his needs. Individuals can be suicidal for many reasons and just because they seem depressed at the time doesn't mean that they do not have other underlying reasons for their depression such as suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), having an addiction disorder or having an untreated mental health disorder.

It is important that you help the individual share all the reasons why this individual may be suicidal so that proper treatment can be delivered by the provider.

And lastly, 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.