

GETTING TO HAPPINESS

Risk Factors

Suicidal behavior is complex. Because of this, risk factors vary with age, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. The most prominent risk factors for suicidal behavior include:

Undiagnosed depression and other mental distress - amongst the highest risk because there is no medical attention to support balanced living

Psychiatric diagnosis – Diagnosed depression, bipolar, and personality disorders are factors put and individual at higher risk

Mistrust of health professionals – This distrust combined with the stigma of mental illness, frequently leads African Americans to seek mental support from non-medical sources.

Cultural barriers between many doctors and their patients - If a physician is ignorant of the life experiences of a patient, they cannot emphatically deal with the root cause issues.

Socioeconomic factors – Limited access to medical and mental health care due to lack of insurance or adequate financials.

Stigma about mental illness - Many men believe mental distress is a weakness, and seeking help will sacrifice their masculinity.



September is Suicide Awareness & Prevention Month

The fact that mental dis-ease is a taboo topic is the primary reason that so many people go untreated. This is especially true for Black American males. As September is Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month, we are focusing on the hard truth that no one ones to hear, suicide is one of the top ten causes of death. For Black American young men and adolescents, suicide soars to the third-leading cause of death.

Of course, these risk factors alone do not lead to suicide. In combination with changes in brain chemicals called neurotransmitters (with serotonin being the best known), they can lead to suicidal behavior. Like any other disease, it's the condition that causes suicidal thoughts or behavior that should be treated - not just the symptoms. Being aware saves lives.

Pain Undiscussed

When distressed people think they are disempowered, disenfranchised, disrespected - dissed - they express their dissatisfaction through destructive behavior. They don't talk about the issues that cause the feeling of being dissed, they talk about the symptoms. The symptoms always center around what another entity has done to them (parent, sibling, job, some one or thing outside of themselves). They believe the strong thing to do is to act as though all is well. Yet, the silence people think of as strength is an impediment to a balanced life. Know the symptoms of distress that can lead to suicide.

Risk Factors Cont.

Post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) – Survivors of trauma often struggle with untreated nightmares and flashbacks of the event.

Substance abuse – Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol to dull the pain

Genetics or prior family history of suicide – Studies show a genetic connection to suicidal behavior.

Prior attempted suicide – When there has been a previous suicide attempt there is a greater risk of making a future attempt.

Contagion by other recent suicides - An individual may be more likely to attempt suicide if they have recently learned about another suicide.

Major loss – The death of a loved one (including a pet), divorce, or the loss of finances are significant events that could preface a suicide attempt.

Sleep deprivation – Lack of sleep can make one feel very unbalanced, and could contribute to significant relationship difficulties.

Some antidepressant drugs – Studies show that the drugs nearly doubled the risk of suicide among children and young adults.

Sexual or physical abuse (including bullying) – Studies have shown that children who are repeatedly abused are at greater risk for suicide.

Incarceration – the trauma and stigma of incarceration is another major risk factor for major imbalance.

A firearm in the home – Access to firearms provides a lethal means for an attempt.

Don't self diagnose or medicate. Talk to a naturopath doctor or therapist to be sure that you are getting the right treatment for your unique situation.

Symptoms of Suicide Ideation:

Moodiness – Long-lasting sadness and mood swings can be symptoms of depression, a major risk factor for suicide.

Sudden calmness – Suddenly changing behavior, especially calmness after a period of anxiety.

Recklessness – Potentially dangerous behavior, such as reckless driving, unsafe sex, and increased use of drugs and/or alcohol might indicate that the person no longer values his or her life.

Anger/Rage – Men tend to externalize their feelings by blaming them on other people, and act out their frustration through anger.

General dis-ease – Doubts about self-worth or ability to cope, or simply appearing unhappy and apathetic or showing signs of severe anxiety.

Little or no social contact/pulling away from friends - Choosing to be alone and avoiding friends or social activities are also possible symptoms of depression.

Suddenly having trouble at work or school – Irritability, difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly, distractibility, and indecisiveness can lead to altercations with others, as well as a tendency to lose items.

Getting affairs in order – Often a person considering suicide will begin to put his or her personal business in order. This includes visiting friends and family members, giving away possessions, making a will, and cleaning.

Knowledge saves lives.

Nature to the rescue!

There is no shame in healing. Like a see-saw we all go through the ups and downs of life. Nature is on standby, because life is meant to have ups and down; and because we are human, we can get stuck. Fortunately, there are several herbs that help level mood swings and emotional distress.

St. John's Wort & Valerian root – reduces stress and anxiety as it is a sedative and relaxant.

Rhodiola Rosea – normalizes brain function to help decrease stress, improve appetite and decrease irritability.

Kava Kava – calms the central nervous system

Passion Flower – reduces insomnia, anxiety, ADHD and nervousness.

Licorice – has shown anti depressive effects

Siberian Ginseng – increase one's level of energy and overall vitality and helps one maintain emotional balance.

Wild Yam – for nervousness and restlessness

Gotu Kola – alleviates depression, mental fatigue, stress and anxiety