



SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION HANDBOOK

No one dies by suicide because they want to die. They just need to stop the pain.

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My journey into mental well-being started with the death by suicide of my son, Khaliyq. I wondered how someone who was so full of vigor and promise could fall into imbalance so severe that the best solution his mind could thin of was to take his life to end the mental pain. So I became a mental health advocate and life coach to teach others that mental health is our true wealth.. Mental health requires maintenance just like physical health, so that the extreme of suicide completion does not become the solution to ending the pain. We should know the signs and symptoms of mental imbalance so that we can help ourselves and others.

This handbook is dedicated to all those living with suffering and despair due to the many forms of emotional distress... and those who love them.





Suicide has reached epidemic levels

Prior to the pandemic, suicide deaths were increasing dramatically for African American adults in the U.S. While total population rates decreased, suicide rates have continued to increase during the pandemic for African Americans and other people of color.

.While suicide deaths occur across all ages they have increased for African American you, with the highest rate for those between 25-34 years old.

Since suicide is a silent killer, one way to end the trend is to talk about it. We must continue to bring these conversations into the public arena to enlighten ourselves and others around the importance of practicing mental balance. In doing so we shift the stigma and allow mental health to be our true source of wealth.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. WARNING SIGNS

Understanding the signs that you or someone you know may be experiencing thoughts of suicide may help prevent suicide.

2. RISKS FACTORS

There are many factors associated with suicide that includes demographics, social and cultural factors, biological factors, physical illness, and mental illness.

3. SUPPORT

There are steps you can take to keep yourself safe through a crisis.

Friends and family can help by knowing how to be supportive.

WARNING SIGNS

The best way to prevent suicide is to recognize these warning signs and know how to respond if you see them:



Talking about:

- Wanting to die
- Great guilt or shame
- Being a burden to others



Feeling:

- Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
- Mood swings: extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
- Unbearable emotional or physical pain

Changing behavior, such as:

- Making a plan or researching ways to die
- Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will
- Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Eating or sleeping more or less
- Using drugs or alcohol more often
- Loss of interest in daily activities



RISK FACTORS

Suicide often does not have one direct cause and those who attempt or die by suicide often have a mix of risk and protective factors in their life. Understanding risk is the first step towards prevention. Risk factors fall into 4 broad categories: community, societal, personal, and relationship.

COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS

- Lack of access to healthcare
- Suicide cluster in the community
- Stress of acculturation
- Community violence
- Historical trauma
- Discrimination

SOCIETAL RISK FACTORS

- Stigma associated with seeking help and mental illness
- Easy access to lethal means of suicide among people at risk
- Unsafe media portrayals of suicide

RISK FACTORS

INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS

- Previous suicide attempt
- History of depression and other mental illnesses
- Serious illness such as chronic pain
- Criminal/legal problems
- Job/financial problems or loss
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies
- Substance misuse
- Current or prior history of adverse childhood experiences
- Sense of hopelessness
- Violence victimization and/or perpetration

RELATIONSHIP RISK FACTORS

- Bullying
- Family/loved one's history of suicide
- Loss of relationships
- High conflict or violent relationships
- Social isolation

HELP YOURSELF BEFORE REACHING CRISIS MODE

Suicide is preventable. Mental health conditions are manageable and when managed, the risk of suicide is much lower. You can help yourself by:

- taking notice and being aware of how you are feeling.
- eating a diet that fortifies mental health.
- movement. Boost your mood with exercise.
- finding ways to relax, including breath work to activate the parasympathetic nervous system for rest and restoration.
- maintaining strong connections to supportive friends and family.
- volunteering. Helping someone else is a great way to uplift yourself.
- learning mind management and other techniques to enhance mental balancing skills.
- finding access to mental and physical health care.
- listening to calming music or frequencies.
- making a pact with yourself for no self harm.

No suicide agreement

Before you get to a point of crisis, your commitment to yourself can refocus you. A crisis is defined as a “mental health emergency” (e.g., your urges to harm get to the point that you are at immediate risk of attempting suicide or for harming someone else). A "no suicide" agreement can remind you that your life is valuable despite the dark thoughts and emotions you are experiencing. Below is an example, feel free to modify this or create your own for more personal resonance.

I _____ make a pact with my Self and all humanity that I will not purposefully do harm to myself or another. I will not let the feelings of despair and hopelessness overtake me. Taking my life is not a solution to the pain I am feeling. I will accept the despair as a feeling based on a current situation and not make it a statement about me or my entire future. On my life journey, I will have experiences leading to states of frustration, anger, and hopelessness. If I get to the point of despair, I will try to step out of the unforgiving past, stop thinking about a bleak future and deal with only getting through the present moment without judgment of my challenges. When I cannot find equilibrium myself, I will get help before taking another step. Once I have restored my balance, I can look at the situation through clearer eyes and make a sound decision.

4 STEPS FOR

HELPING SOMEONE THROUGH A CRISIS

ASK

ASK THE TOUGH QUESTIONS DIRECTLY, "ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT TAKING YOUR OWN LIFE?"



KEEP THEM SAFE

SEPARATE THEM FROM ANYTHING THEY COULD USE TO HURT THEMSELVES.



BE THERE

HELPING SOMEONE FEEL INCLUDED AND SUPPORTED CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE DURING A CHALLENGING TIME. A SIMPLE ACT OF KINDNESS CAN HELP SOMEONE FEEL LESS ALONE.



HELP THEM CONNECT & STAY CONNECTED

CONNECT THEM WITH A SUPPORT SYSTEM SUCH AS FAMILY, FRIENDS, CLERGY, COACHES, CO-WORKERS, OR THERAPIST. CHECK IN ON A REGULAR BASIS.



FIND SUPPORT



CRISIS HOTLINES

- Call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988.
- Contact the Crisis Text Line - text HELLO to 741741.
- Contact social media outlets directly if you are concerned about a friend's social media updates or dial 911 in an emergency.

FIND A THERAPIST



[Melanin & Mental Health](#) - culturally aware therapist for people of color

[General list by zip code](#) - from Psychology Today

Free Resources - to help eliminate the economic barrier (coming soon)



FIND YOUR PATH TO BALANCE

This world is more beautiful with you in it.

I ask that you take the journey with me to become a Mental Revolutionary. A Mental Revolutionary is one who:

- questions what they think, as all thoughts are not truth.
- is comfortable being their authentic self
- develops an ability to cope that is stronger than the pressure of life's stressors using mental well-being tools and techniques
- remains productive and fruitful despite the environment.

Balance, like life itself, is a journey. There will always be challenges; and there will always be a way forward. Find what works for you to sustain your mental balance. Get my **YOUR BALANCE TOOLKIT** for techniques to assist you in getting to balance.

GET YOUR BALANCE TOOLKIT