

# What to watch for: Warning signs of suicidal thoughts

September 13 2022, by Mary Cunningham

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The pandemic has increased general awareness and promotion of mental health; however, roughly 46,000 Americans die by suicide each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This translates to about one death every 11 minutes. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people ages 10–14 and 25–34.

During Suicide Prevention Awareness Month (September), K. Pierre Eklou, assistant professor in the Department of Nursing, shines light on this often-stigmatized topic and promotes [suicide prevention](#).

"Suicide does not occur in a vacuum. There are always warning signs; knowing those can help prevent [suicide](#)," said Eklou, who is a Board-Certified Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) and runs Mason's PMHNP program. "Suicidal thoughts can manifest differently in each person, so there's a range of behaviors to watch for. If you are worried about someone, seek help. If you are worried about yourself, seek help. You are not alone."

### **Warning signs of suicidal thoughts**

- Thoughts or discussion of wanting to die or having no reason to live
- Thoughts of being a burden to others
- Feeling isolated or withdrawn
- Engaging in risky or reckless behavior
- Exhibiting mood swings
- Lack of interest in future plans
- Increasing use of alcohol or other [illicit substances](#)
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Giving away possessions
- Saying "goodbye" to family, friends, or loved ones
- Looking for ways to kill oneself

**What should you do if you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts?**

If you are having [suicidal thoughts](#), know that you are not alone, and help is available. If you know someone who is exhibiting suicidal warning signs, reach out to them and a professional for help. View Mason's list of suicide prevention resources [here](#).

Anyone in the United States can call or text 988, the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, to be connected to trained counselors who will listen, understand how someone's problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary. The National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is working to change the conversation from "suicide" to "suicide prevention" to promote help and healing and to give hope.

If you are in [crisis](#) or having suicidal thoughts, contact 988 the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Provided by George Mason University

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