Warning Signs of Suicide

- Aggressive behavior
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Decline in schoolwork
- Depression
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Giving away possessions
- Legal questions about death
- Loss of interest in regular activities
- Loss of energy
- Mood swings and personality changes
- Neglecting personal appearance
- Preoccupation with death
- Previous suicide attempts
- Psychosomatic complaints
- Self-destructive behavior
- Sudden changes in eating habits
- Suddenly happy after long depression
- Talking about death and suicide
- Talking about life after death
- Unnecessary and dangerous risks
- Withdrawal from friends or family

Many young people will exhibit some of the signs listed in this publication. One sign may, or may not, signal trouble; however, more than one sign lasting two weeks or longer is often a signal that help is needed.

If you, or someone you know, is considering suicide, seek help *immediately*. Inform an adult right away, such as a parent, teacher, coach, principle, clergy, counselor, doctor, or call a crisis hotline.

For more information on suicide and suicide prevention:

National Hopeline Network
1-800-SUICIDE
www.hopeline.com

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education
1-888-511-SAVE
www.save.org

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
1-800-888-333-AFSP
www.afsp.org

Suicide Prevention Action Network USA, Inc.
1-888-649-1366
www.spanusa.org

THE AMERICAN LEGION
National Commission on Children and Youth
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

www.legion.org

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Know the

Warning Signs
of Youth Suicide

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Facts and Myths of Suicide

"The number of teen suicides is small compared to other causes."

In 1996, more teenagers and young adults died of suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia and influenza, and chronic lung disease COMBINED.

"People who talk about suicide are just looking for attention. They really don't kill themselves."

Eight out of ten people who commit suicide tell someone that they're thinking about hurting themselves before they actually do it. Most people exhibit warning signs prior to a suicide attempt.

"Young people who have attempted suicide before won't ever try again."

Four out of every five people who complete suicide have made at least one previous suicide attempt.

"When adolescents talk about suicide, try to change the subject to get their mind off it."

Take all talk of suicide seriously. Listen carefully and give them a chance to express their feelings. Let them know that you are concerned and that you want to help.

"Most young people who kill themselves really want to die and have set their mind on suicide."

Most people who kill themselves are unresolved about whether they want to live or die. Suicide is often a "cry for help" that ends in tragedy.

"If a person's "mind is made up", there is no use in trying to change it; they can't be stopped."

People who are contemplating suicide go back and forth, thinking about life and death. They don't want to die; they just want the pain to stop. Once they know they can be helped, that there are treatments available for their illness, that it isn't their fault and that they are not alone, it gives them hope. We should never "give up" on someone, just because we think they've made their mind up!

"Young people don't kill themselves"

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24.

"Suicides by young people do not occur often ."

A person under 25 commits suicide every 2 hours and over one million attempt suicide every year.

The American Legion is very concerned about the welfare of our nation's youth and a major problem that threatens them. Among adolescents, ages 15–24, suicide continues to be the third leading cause of death and the fourth leading cause of 10-14 year olds. Over 4,000 young people take their own lives every year. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem and is completely preventable.

This brochure has been designed to assist you in understanding some of the warning signs and facts about suicide. By reading and familiarizing yourself with the warning signs and information contained in this brochure, you may be able to save a life. Every single life is sacred and we all must do our part to preserve it. You may be able to save a life if you will take the time to learn the Warning Signs of youth suicide.

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