

## Some Lethal Myths

Bringing up suicide may only make things worse. *WRONG. Talking about it is the only way to help.*

Someone who is suicidal will always want to die. *WRONG. Being suicidal is a temporary state and intervening may keep it from recurring.*

If I'm wrong about someone being suicidal, I may lose a friend or cost them their job. *WRONG. If you do nothing, you and their family may lose them forever.*

They have helped suicidal people in the past, so they know what to do. *WRONG. They may not be able to or may not know how to ask for help. They need your help now.*

## How do I get help if someone is having thoughts of suicide?

**988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** - Dial 988 24/7 to speak with a trained crisis counselor. Press option 1 to reach the Veterans and Military Crisis Line.

**Safe Call Now** - 206-459-3020  
Confidential 24/7 crisis line for emergency responders

**Fire & EMS Helpline** - 888-731-FIRE (3473)  
National Volunteer Fire Council 24/7 Crisis Line

**Montgomery County Emergency Service (MCES)** - 610-279-6100  
24/7 crisis intervention services

**Montgomery County  
Emergency Service**  
50 Beech Drive  
Norristown, PA 19403



## What First Responders Need to Know About Suicide

*Information for police officers, EMTs, paramedics, fire fighters, and their families*

**Montgomery County  
Emergency Service**

50 Beech Drive  
Norristown, PA 19403

610-279-6100

[www.mces.org](http://www.mces.org)

## Purpose of this information

First responders routinely assist people who appear to be at risk of suicide. However, they often don't see warning signs of suicide in members of their unit or even themselves. Stigma may also keep first responders from asking for help. This brochure contains information about what you need to know and what you can do if someone that you work with may be suicidal.

## How does suicide happen?

A suicide may occur when both a strong **intent** to die and the **capability** for potentially lethal self-harm **come together**.

A desire to die may result from a person's *belief* that they are a burden to those close to them or that everyone would be better off without them.

A capability for lethal self-harm may result from personal or job-related trauma, exposure to abuse or violence, pain, access to firearms or other weapons, military training, and many other experiences.

## Warning Signs for Suicide

Warning signs are behaviors that may indicate a **person is experiencing thoughts of suicide and may be thinking of harming themselves**.

Warning signs of suicide risk include:

- Feeling trapped or as if they are losing control
- Increase in alcohol or other substance use
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- Anxiety, agitation, or sleep problems
- Mood changes, growing pessimism, unnecessary risk-taking
- Growing self-criticism
- Black and white thinking (i.e. all or nothing)

## Danger Signs for Suicide

- Giving away meaningful, prized, or favored items
- Making final arrangements
- Suddenly happier and calmer, especially after a period of sadness

## Potential Triggers for Suicidal Thoughts

- Marital issues, divorce, or separation
- Personal financial problems
- On-duty critical incident
- Disciplinary action or suspension
- Death of a spouse, child, or loved one
- Serious injury or disability

For more information about suicide prevention, visit [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

## How do I help someone who may be having suicidal thoughts?

- **Go with your gut** and trust your instincts
- **Reach out** to the individual as soon as possible
- **Directly ask** about suicide - "**Are you thinking about killing yourself?**"
- If they are, **insist on getting help** as soon as possible
- **Involve a trusted mutual friend**
- Do not believe them if they say, "**I'm really okay now.**"

## When should I get emergency help?

You should reach out for immediate help if an individual is:

- Voicing or otherwise communicating to others that clear thoughts of suicide are present
- Working out a specific suicide plan with when and how they would harm themselves
- Seeking out a way to harm themselves

**Any one of the above signals immediate danger, and you must:**

- Remove weapons only if it is safe to do so
- Call for emergency help
- Do not let the person leave and do not let them be alone.

*Involve supervision or command of the situation as this indicates a potentially life-threatening situation.*