

## Everyone Can Help Prevent Suicide

by Stan P. Collins, Suicide Prevention Specialist

(NAPSA)—“Are you thinking of ending your life?” Few phrases are as difficult to say to a loved one, but when it comes to suicide prevention, none is more important.

Suicide can be prevented and people with suicidal thoughts and feelings can be helped. It’s vital to take the signs seriously and step in or speak up if you see even one warning sign.

When someone experiences thoughts of suicide, the pain he or she feels is real. Experts believe that most suicidal individuals do not want to die but they may not know how to go on living with the pain. While these crises are often temporary, people with thoughts of suicide are unable to see alternatives. Just by staying with the person, acknowledging the pain and helping him or her seek support, you could save a life.

Unfortunately, pain isn’t always obvious. The warning signs for suicide manifest in different ways. Behaviors might include talk about suicide or about feeling trapped, helplessness, hopelessness and withdrawal. Dramatic changes in eating and sleeping habits, reckless behavior and increased use of alcohol and drugs may also be signs.

Studies show that people who know the signs of suicide and where to find helpful resources are more likely to take lifesaving action. Take the time to learn how to help now, so you’re ready to be there when it matters most.

Know the Signs, an initiative of Each Mind Matters: California’s Mental Health Movement, provides information to know the signs of suicide, find the words to offer help to someone, and reach



**By knowing the signs, you may be able to save someone who’s thinking about suicide.**

out to nearby resources, such as crisis hotlines and support groups that can provide care.

With funding and support from the California Mental Health Services Authority through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63), California has made a significant investment in initiatives like Know the Signs that are intended to prevent suicides, prevent mental illness, promote mental wellness and connect individuals with help before they reach a crisis point.

Through its website, SuicideIsPreventable.org, community training and a statewide media campaign, Know the Signs has helped millions of Californians gain the knowledge and confidence to intervene with someone at risk for suicide.

Everyone can know the signs, find the words and reach out to identify and support those who might be thinking about suicide. Get the info and tools you need at [SuicideIsPreventable.org](http://SuicideIsPreventable.org) and follow these tips to be there for

someone who is going through a tough time.

- Reduce pain: Spend time with loved ones, listen to them, distract them, and divert their attention away from the pain.

- Increase hope: Let them know you are there for them, get them to smile, make them laugh, help them to remember that they didn’t always feel this way and there is a good chance that they will feel better again someday.

- Improve connection: Take their calls, pick up the phone and call them, stop by to say hello, ask them to join you for a walk, invite them to dinner, let them know how important it is that they are in your life.

- Reduce capacity: Reduce access to lethal means, help to remove harmful items from their home, invite them to stay with you until they feel better or whenever they don’t want to be alone, ask them to call whenever they feel like no one is listening.

People who have struggled with thoughts of suicide, and even those who have attempted it, can and do get better. You can help make that possible by showing care and concern to those who may be vulnerable. Asking whether they are okay, listening to what they have to say in a non-judgmental way and letting them know you care can have a significant impact and even save a life.

Trained crisis counselors are just a phone call away 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, or if you need guidance on how to help someone else, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK (8255).