

Why Suicide Prevention Matters & What You Can Do

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Every 12 minutes someone in the country dies of suicide, which has caused it to become the second leading cause of death for individuals between 18 and 34.

Anyone could be struggling with suicide; it affects all ages, genders and ethnicities. However, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, men are more likely to die by suicide, and certain demographic subgroups are at a higher risk, such as American Indian youth, middle-age people, as well as non-Hispanic white middle-aged and older males.

Why is this important? Nearly 45,000 suicides occurred in the United States in 2016 — more than twice the number of homicides, leading many experts and advocates to believe this should be viewed as a public health crisis.

While it may seem as though depression alone is the only cause for suicide, that is not the case. Some additional factors that contribute to suicidal thoughts or ideation are opioid addiction, economic downturns, lack of mental health diagnoses and treatment, physical health conditions, strained relationships and other life stressors. There is also a strong evidence linking bullying and suicide.

Over the last five years at Family Houston, there has been an increase in the number of clients diagnosed with depression. It is one of the most common mental health disorders our counselors treat.

In 2018, 44 percent of clients reported symptoms consistent with depression and 17 percent had some sort of suicidal thoughts. When treating clients, our licensed counselors take a personalized approach. Some of the treatment methods they use are cognitive-behavioral therapy and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing in conjunction with adaptive coping strategies. Through personalized treatment plans, 77 percent of children and 69 percent of adults seen by our counselors during 2018 fiscal year said they improved or maintained their happiness.

By educating yourself, understanding how to talk about suicide, and recognizing the warning signs and what to do if you suspect someone is at risk, you can help destigmatize suicide and save someone's life. Some of the common signs to be cognizant of is if someone is talking about wanting to die, feeling empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live; planning or looking for a way to kill themselves; talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions; or withdrawing from family and friends. For more on the common signs and ways to help destigmatize and prevent death by suicide, visit the National Institute of Mental Health's website.

If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts or depression you can call the Crisis of Intervention Houston Hotline at 832-416-1177. If you are a teen, you can call the teen talk hotline at 832-416-1199 or text 281-202-4430.