

# Women and Suicide Prevention

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- Mental health problems are common
- Stigma is associated with mental health problems
- Professional help is not always on hand
- Individuals with mental health problems often do not seek help
- Many people...
  1. are not well informed about mental health problems.
  2. do not know how to respond



# Statistics

- In the United States 41,149 suicides.
- 10 Leading cause of death.
- Suicide is the 14<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for women.
- Females are 4 times more likely to attempt than men.
- In 2014, 20.7 suicides per 100,000 men. Women 5.8 per 100,000 women.
- Between 1999 and 2014 there has been an increase in the suicide rates of women.
- Women Ages 10-24 the rates have increased three times for between 1999-2014.
- Middle Age Women ages 45-65 had the highest rates of Suicide between this time period.
- Suicide Attempts occur at least 10 times more than suicide.

# What is a Mental Disorder?

- What are some terms we use in the community?
- Why do we have such negative terms for mental illnesses?
- How would you explain it to a child?

**CRAZY** **STRANGE** **CUCKOO**  
**NUTTER** **BUNTCASE**  
**FLAKY** **LUNATIC**  
**RETARD** **DISTURBED**  
**WACKO** **IMBALANCED**  
**DEMENTED** **LOONY**  
**LOGO** **BASKETCASE**  
**SCORNBALL** **SIMPLE**  
**DANGEROUS** **BONKERS**  
**THICK** **CRACKER**

Sticks and stones  
may break my bones  
**but words will  
also hurt me.**

Stamp out  
**STIGMA**  
Mental health is not a weakness  
and seeking help is not a failure.

A mental disorder or mental illness is a diagnosable illness that

- Affects a person's thinking, emotional state and behavior
- Disrupts the person's ability to
  - Work or attend school
  - Carry out daily activities
  - Engage in satisfying relationships

# Mental Illness

Mental Illness can be more disabling than many chronic physical illnesses. For example:

- The disability from moderate depression is similar to the impact from relapsing multiple sclerosis, severe asthma, chronic hepatitis B.

- The disability from severe depression is comparable to the disability from quadriplegia.

“Disability” refers to the amount of disruption a health problems causes to a person’s ability to: Work, attend school, carry out daily activities, and engage in satisfying relationships.









# Women, Stress, Depression

- Taking care of everyone
- Taking on too many commitments
- Difficulty setting limits and saying “no”
- Feeling guilty when saying “no”
- Behavior culturally accepted, expected, encouraged, especially among women of color
- Set-up for exhaustion and depressive symptoms



# Depression in Women



# Women and Depression

- Depression is a major risk factor for suicide attempts and other suicidal behaviors.
- Depression disproportionately affects women (Chaudron, 2004)
- Major Depression
- Dysthymia
- Atypical Depression
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- Premenstrual dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)
- Post Partum Depression



# Signs and Symptoms- Physical

- Chronic fatigue
- Lack of energy
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Constipation
- Weight loss or gain
- Headaches
- Irregular menstrual cycle
- Loss of sexual desire
- Unexplained aches and pains



# Signs and Symptoms- Thoughts

- Frequent self-criticism or self-blame
- Pessimism
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Indecisiveness or confusion
- Rigid thinking
- Racing thoughts
- Tendency to believe others see one in a negative light
- Altered sense of self
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Odd ideas; lack of insight
- Suspiciousness
- Thoughts of death and suicide



# Signs and Symptoms -Emotional

- Depressed mood and/or mood swings
- Unrealistic or excessive anxiety or guilt
- Excessive irritability or anger
- Lack of inhibition
- Lack of emotion or emotional response
- Helplessness or hopelessness
- Oversensitivity to comments/criticism
- Low self-esteem



# Risk Factors

- Pregnancy Issues
- Postpartum depression
- Premenstrual problems
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Trauma
- Eating disorders
- Poor Self Image
- Lower socioeconomic status



# TALK

- Ending their life.
- Having No Reason to Live
- Feeling they are a burden
- Feeling Trapped
- Unbearable Pain

# Behavior

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Insomnia
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Looks for a way to kill themselves

# Mood

- Depression
- Apathy
- Rage
- Irritability
- Impulsivity
- Humiliation
- Anxiety

**ASK! ASK!!ASK!!!**



# ASK!

- Don't hesitate to raise the subject.
- Be direct, but non-confrontational. Engage them:
  - Are you thinking about suicide?
  - What thoughts or plans do you have?
  - Are you thinking about harming yourself, ending your life?
  - How long have you been thinking about suicide?
  - Do you really want to die, or do you want the pain to go away?



# ASK!

- Do You Have A Plan
- Have you thought about how you would do it?
- Special Date
- Do you have the items?



# ASK!

- Do you have a therapist/doctor?
- Are you seeing him/her?
- Are you taking your medications?





- Do not leave the person alone
- Know referral resources
- Reassure the person
- Encourage the person to participate in the helping process
- Encourage the suicidal person to identify other people in their lives who can also help.

# What to do next?

- **Call for professional help**
- **911**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

**Mental Health is Treatable!!**  
**Therefore suicide is Preventable!!**

# YOU CAN SAVE A LIFE!



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
[www. afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

Lifesavers University  
[www.lifesaversuniversity.com](http://www.lifesaversuniversity.com)