

COLLEGE SCENARIOS

With a partner or small group, read and discuss each of the scenarios below. What behavioral signs do you notice? How would you react to the person in the scenario?

- 1.** You call Peter and he answers after the tenth ring. Even though it's 5:00 on Saturday afternoon, he sounds like he's been sleeping. When you ask him to come with you for pizza and a movie, he says he doesn't feel like it. Peter never seems to want to do things any more, and he sleeps all the time.
Do you think Peter needs help? What would you do?
- 2.** In the dining hall, Melissa is telling everyone who will listen how upset she is. "I totally blew my biology final! And I studied! I really did!" she wails. "I might not even pass. If my parents have to pay for this again, I might as well be dead!"
Do you think Melissa needs help? What would you do?
- 3.** Neal is giving you the creeps. Every time you spend time with him, he talks about killing himself, and he gets more and more detailed about how he would do it. At first it seemed like a joke but it's not funny any more.
Do you think Neal needs help? What would you do?
- 4.** Susan wears big floppy sweaters, but they can't hide the fact that she's getting thinner and thinner. One day you sit next to her in class and you're shocked by how bony she is.
Do you think Susan needs help? What would you do?
- 5.** Andie was never a drinker, but lately she parties three or four times a week and gets really drunk, to the point of passing out. She can barely stay awake at school and her friends are getting tired of being around her.
Do you think Andie needs help? What would you do?
- 6.** John always has been moody, but his girlfriend Kari kept him upbeat. Kari just broke up with John, and he is totally despondent. One night he gives you his leather jacket, saying he doesn't need it any more.
Do you think John needs help? What would you do?

FACTS ABOUT COLLEGE SUICIDE

In the U.S., suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students, after accidents.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Depression. Students who are clinically depressed, manic depressive, or have other mood disorders are more likely to attempt suicide. Signs of possible depression include feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness; sleeping and/or eating too much or too little; pulling away from friends and previously enjoyable activities; and thinking and talking about of death.

Previous suicide attempts. Most people who die by suicide make at least one attempt before completing the act.

Alcohol and other drug use. People who are dependent on alcohol and/or other drugs are likely to have other risk factors for suicide.

Talking about suicide. Most people who are planning suicide talk about it before they act, either directly (“I’m going to kill myself”) or indirectly (“I won’t be bothering you any more”).

Having a suicide plan. People who intend to commit suicide may have planned in detail how they will do it. The more specific the plan, the more likely it is that the person will follow through.

IF YOU THINK SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS SUICIDAL...

Ask the hard questions. Don’t be afraid to say: “Are you thinking about suicide?” Just saying the words will not put the idea in someone’s head.

Listen. Pay close attention, don’t interrupt, and try to reflect back the person’s feelings. (“It sounds like you feel really stressed about all the work you have to do.”)

Be supportive. Say things like “I really care about you,” or “You are important to me.”

Tell someone. Speak to a resident assistant, a mental health counselor, or another trusted person. Even if it makes the suicidal person angry, it is critical to get help. You will probably be thanked later on.

If someone has a plan for suicide, has the means to do it, and has a time schedule, that means he or she is at high risk. Do not leave such a person alone. Make sure at least one person stays with the individual while someone else gets help. The exception to this is when a weapon is involved. In that case, leave the premises and call the police immediately.