Want to do something but no one to help?

If your community or organization is not sensitized to or aware of the problem of suicide, you may feel isolated and on your own with your desire to make a difference. We suggest a number of activities that might help you link with others just as concerned as you are.

• begin a discussion with anyone about the size of the problem of suicidal behavior and/or the availability of community resources.
• visit a funeral home and ask to see their resources on death and bereavement.
• ask your local schools if they have guidelines in place for responding to suicides.
• ask your local law enforcement agency about means for restricting access to firearms.
• contact your local crisis line and ask what resources they have available for education and training.
• contact your local emergency services to ask about procedures and follow-up for persons who self-injure.
• contact some of the resources on the resource list to find out how they help with suicide prevention.
• see if there is interest in having a suicideTALK session or safeTALK or ASIST training for any group that you belong to.

Found a few like-minded persons at the session?

A suicideTALK session is a great place to meet other people who want to work at preventing suicide. Building upon these partnerships, you may wish to do some of the things from the list above. You might also find some useful ideas in the following list.

• locate an interested “lead” agency or group willing to “take on” suicide prevention community development work.
• develop a community or organization policy statement. Something as simple as, “Suicide is a serious community health concern in our community” will connect you with others who might want to help.
• find ways of inviting and empowering instead of fueling competition over resources.
• make an inventory of services currently available for persons at risk including comments on strengths and gaps in services.
• organize a conference, workshop or focus group activity that invites members to help document the “suicide situation” in your community or organization.

Self and other maintenance and promotion

Don’t forget yourself! Only being against suicide is not self-maintaining or promoting. Take some of your colleagues and go for a walk, buy some ice cream, watch kids in a swimming pool, play with pets, go skiing. Talk to your partner, make love, play a game, take in a movie. Put your feet up, read a book, pray, meditate, fly a kite. Live life.

References

circulate fact sheets containing current suicide statistics and include information on the frequency of suicide-related calls to local crisis services.


focus on ways to motivate broad-based community interest and commitments to work together.

brainstorm creative ways of getting everyone in the community involved—donations of services, space, air time, including corporate and business support.

develop a comprehensive suicide prevention plan, mutually created and agreed to by key community players.

set priorities and find funds to support persons who can meet those priorities.

educate and empower significant community players so that eventually they become their agencies’ resident experts.

set mutually determined goals and expectations for suicide prevention that are reasonable and measurable.

work with a process that elicits ownership of the problem and solution, moving to written protocols and procedures only after the sense of ownership has been established.

Use safeTALK to teach suicide alertness skills. Use ASIST to teach suicide intervention skills. Together, they will improve community or organization communication and networking as well as create a solid resource base. Do this before introducing community awareness and prevention activities that increase the demand for service.

Run out of ideas?

Start or re-visit A Matrix of Suicide Prevention Activities. Return to it whenever it feels like nothing is working and you need some fresh ideas. The matrix is packed with ideas and may need an orientation to use effectively. Definitions of protect, preserve and promote are on the matrix handout. There are two other dimensions: three perspectives and six activity sites.

The individual role or perspective is concerned with what an individual can or might want to do as a helper or might need as a person at risk. The individual may or may not be or even see him or herself as a helper. The perspective is personal and centered on immediate family and close friends.

A second perspective is that of someone who is in a designated or potential helper role. Such an individual is now aware of the value of being a helper in a larger context than only with persons who are personally significant. This broader perspective now consistently includes self-care for the helper.

The resource perspective is the broadest. It includes resource needs and/or mobilizing individual/helper resources, and increasingly, as movement down the activity sites occurs, with organizing the community with the objective of supporting resources or creating life-assisting community conditions.

We also distinguish six areas in which suicide prevention activities could be focused: home, informing others, learn helping, help others learn, coordinate community and develop policy.

Although these three dimensions are not completely independent, they create a matrix that is very useful. We are reasonably certain that you will discover new ways to help prevent suicide by working with this matrix. Our confidence stems from having had that happen to us.