



SIEC ALERT

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A Suicide Attempt is Meaningful and Significant

A suicide attempt is considered to be a prime risk factor for future suicidality. Those who have attempted suicide are at greater risk of eventually dying by suicide, and a history of repeat attempts further increases a person's risk of death by suicide.

Even so, some common myths and attitudes persist that have served to minimize the significance of a suicidal act, in our society.

"She's always threatening to kill herself. But it's just talk."

In fact, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 75% of all people who try to kill themselves give prior warning of their intentions.

We need to take all suicide threats seriously.

"Oh, he was just trying to get attention. If he wanted to kill himself he would have done it."

In fact, UK studies show that approximately one out of every 100 suicide attempters will die by suicide within a year of an attempt, a suicide risk approximately 100 times that of the general population. (www.samaritans.org)

Reasons

Although the circumstances leading up to a suicide attempt are different for everyone, self-reported reasons for a suicide attempt most frequently describe a wish to die, to escape, or to obtain relief from an unbearable situation, or a sense of overwhelming emotional pain.

Incidence

Between 1993 and 1997, over 14,000 Albertans were hospitalized due to intentional self-inflicted injury. In one year, 6,800 Albertans were treated for self-inflicted injury in ER. (Alberta Centre for Injury Control, Suicide in Alberta: Data Report) Often, emergency medical treatment and a hospital discharge the same day, will be all the assistance many individuals who attempt suicide receive.

SIEC ALERT is a topical review of current literature relevant to suicide prevention.

Suicide Information & Education Centre (SIEC)
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SIEC is a program of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division
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According to a U.S. national survey, 45% of those polled knew of a friend or relative who had attempted suicide, but less than half of those who had attempted suicide received any treatment or therapy after the attempt.

Family members, co-workers, and friends are often left to handle the situation alone. Often our lack of knowledge, and our fear that we may do or say something wrong can contribute to our hesitance to help. The same survey (www.roper.com) found that close to half of the respondents had never discussed the suicide attempt.

Helping a Friend or Family Member After a Suicide Attempt

- Show your concern and care.
- Offer your support, and be prepared to listen without judgment or criticism.
- Offer hope and reassurance for the future.
- Ensure that the individual is returning to a safe, suicide-proof environment.
- Face your own fears and worries, and seek counsel if you are feeling overwhelmed. Practice self-care.
- Assist the individual in identifying and building a safety net of care, including trusted friends, professionals, and community caregivers.
- Educate yourself. Learn the warning signs of suicide, and how to intervene.
- If there is a psychiatric diagnosis, work with the individual to seek and maintain treatment. You may need to advocate for the individual, or find someone who can.
- Explore ways that the individual can make a desired change, or alleviate a current stressor. Provide reassurance, and offer practical help and support.

sources >

Pamphlets for Families & Friends

Please contact the source that is listed for more details.

"Living With Someone Who is Suicidal:

For parents, partners, family members and close friends of someone who has attempted suicide or feels suicidal"

source: SAFER,

Vancouver, BC

phone: 604-879-9251

"When You Suspect Suicide"

source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.afsp.org

phone: 212-363-3500

"Not Just a 'Cry for Help'"

source: Papyrus,

Rosendale, Wales, UK

papyrus_uk@hotmail.com

SIEC Resources

SIEC Reading List:

"After an Attempt: Books for Attempters and their Caregivers"

source: SIEC

email: siec@suicideinfo.ca

SIEC Pamphlet:

"Suicide Attempts:

Information for Parents,

Foster Parents, and

Guardians Following a Suicide Attempt by a Young Person."

source: SIEC

email: siec@suicideinfo.ca

Sources & Resources

Photocopies are available from SIEC for documents on this list.

Please contact SIEC for pricing information.

SIEC #000325

Wagner, B.M., et al. (2000). Parents' reactions to adolescents' suicide attempts. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 39(4):429-436.

SIEC #010896

Boergers, J., Spirito, A., & Donaldson, D. (1998). Reasons for adolescent suicide attempts: Associations with psychological functioning. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 37(12): 1287-1293.

SIEC #000257

Goldston, D.B., et al. (1999). Suicide attempts among formerly hospitalized adolescents: A prospective naturalistic study of risk during the first 5 years after discharge. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 38(6):660-671.

SIEC#990872

Magne-Ingvar, U. & Ojehagen, A. (1999). One-year follow-up of significant others of suicide attempters. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 34(9):470-476.

SIEC #000239

Beautrais, A.L., Joyce, P.R., & Mulder, R.T. (1998). Psychiatric contacts among youths aged 13 through 24 years who have made serious suicide attempts. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 37(5):504-511.

SIEC #000271

Kirmayer, L. J., Malus, M., & Boothroyd, L.J. (1996). Suicide attempts among Inuit youth: A community survey of prevalence and risk factors. Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 94(1):8-17.

SIEC #990804

Borowsky, I. W., et al. (1999). Suicide attempts among American Indian and Alaska native youth. Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, 153(6): 573-580.

SIEC# 010897

Lewinsohn, P. M., et al. (2001). Gender differences in suicide attempts from adolescence to young adulthood. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 40(4): 427-434.

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