



Lane County

Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative

SEPTEMBER 2019 Snapshot



September is National Suicide Prevention Month

Suicide is an important problem among older adults. Suicide rates are particularly high among older men, with men ages 85 and older having the highest rate of any group in the country. Suicide attempts by older adults are much more likely to result in death than among younger persons. Reasons include:

- Older adults plan more carefully and use more deadly methods.
- Older adults are less likely to be discovered and rescued
- The physical frailty of older adults means they are less likely to recover from an attempt

Suicide prevention efforts seek to reduce risk factors for suicide and strengthen the factors that protect individuals from suicide.

Risk factors:

- Depression and other mental health problems
- Substance use problems (including prescription medications)
- Physical illness, disability and pain
- Social Isolation

Protective factors:

- ✓ Care for mental and physical health problems
- ✓ Social connectedness
- ✓ Skills in coping and adapting to change

<https://www.sprc.org/populations/older-adults>

Suicide Prevention Options for Seniors

- Talk with them
- Connect them with elderly support groups
- Limit access to substances
- Remove lethal means

<https://www.aginginplace.org/elderly-suicide-risks-detection-how-to-help>

5 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

CONVERSATION STARTERS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

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"ARE YOU OKAY?"
Ask the question and mean it. Show you are listening by sitting alongside the person, maintaining an open body position and maintaining comfortable eye contact.

"ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE?"
If you are concerned that someone is considering suicide, ask the question directly. Asking a person if they have been thinking about suicide or have made plans will not increase the risk that they will complete suicide.

"I'VE NOTICED THAT..."
Open the conversation by explaining behavior changes you have noticed. For example, "I've noticed you have been showing up to work late a lot lately." Then, express genuine concern.

"DO YOU WANT TO TAKE A WALK?"
Engaging a friend, family member or loved one you are concerned about in a healthy activity like taking a walk together can be a great way to start a conversation. Doing an activity while you talk can take some of the nerves and discomfort out of the conversation.

"HOW ARE YOU, REALLY?"
Sometimes when someone says they're fine, they're not. Know the warning signs to look for so you can know when to offer extra support.

FIVE TIPS FOR NONJUDGMENTAL LISTENING

- 1 Reflect on your own **state of mind.**
- 2 Adopt an **attitude** of acceptance, genuineness and empathy.
- 3 Use **verbal skills** to show that you're listening.
- 4 Maintain **positive** body language.
- 5 Recognize **cultural** differences.

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Lane County
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OABHI trainings are listed at:
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