

In early June, the deaths of Anthony Bourdain and Kate Spade sparked a national conversation about suicide. Sadly, suicide rates in the United States have risen by 30% over the past two decades, and nearly 45,000 people died from suicide alone in 2016, making it the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.



This month, we delve into some of the warning signs of suicide, and what you can do to protect yourself and others. The most important takeaway: you can get help, for yourself or your loved ones. You are not alone.

## Warning Signs of Suicide

People often associate suicide or suicide attempts with mental health issues, but Jocelyn Bos-Fisher, EAP Clinical Program Manager, notes that mental health is only one of the contributing factors that might lead to suicidal thoughts or actions. Other factors that contribute include:

- events that may trigger feelings of humiliation, shame and/or despair
- chronic physical pain or acute medical problems
- sexual/physical abuse
- substance intoxication or withdrawal
- pending incarceration or homelessness
- legal problems
- inadequate social supports

If you or someone you know is going through a tough time, look out for the following warning signs:

- social isolation
- perceived burden on others
- talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- acting anxious or behavior recklessly
- sleeping too much or too little
- displaying extreme mood swings
- saying goodbye to loved ones and putting affairs in order
- no longer taking pleasure in things

## What can you do to protect against the risk of suicide?

One way to protect against the risk of suicide is to work on developing resiliency, the ability to cope with adversity and adapt to change. The good news? You can develop your resiliency, even in the face of an event, problem, or stress that could potentially trigger thoughts of suicide.

Some ways to develop resiliency include:

- **Practicing stress management techniques** like meditation or deep breathing.
- **Reaching out to your social network** for support.
- **Work with a counselor** to develop positive coping strategies and methods.
- **Reach out to a community support.** There are many resources to help support anyone going through a difficult time and who may have thoughts of harming themselves. Remember there is always someone out there that will listen.

## Where can you go for help?

**C&FS EAP:** You can call EAP anytime at 716-681-4300 for free and confidential 24/7 support and counseling. We can help to develop short term coping skills and link to longer term resources if needed.

**Crisis Services:** 834-3131 is a 24 hour hotline for those experiencing a personal, emotional or mental health crisis. They provide crisis counseling on the phone, suicide prevention, support information and referral.

**Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-8255; this hotline can offer free and confidential support for anyone in distress.

**Veterans Crisis Line:** 1-800-273-8255, press 1.

**Crisis text line:** If you don't feel comfortable talking on the phone, reach out by texting CONNECT to 741741 anywhere in the United States.

**The Mental Health Association of Erie County:** [justtellone.org](http://justtellone.org)