



# **An Introduction to Suicide Prevention**



**American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention**



**Suicide is a  
health issue.**



**Suicide can  
be prevented.**



## **Scope of the Problem**



## **Research**



## **Seniors & Suicide**



## **Prevention**



## **What You Can Do**





**How we talk  
about suicide  
matters.**

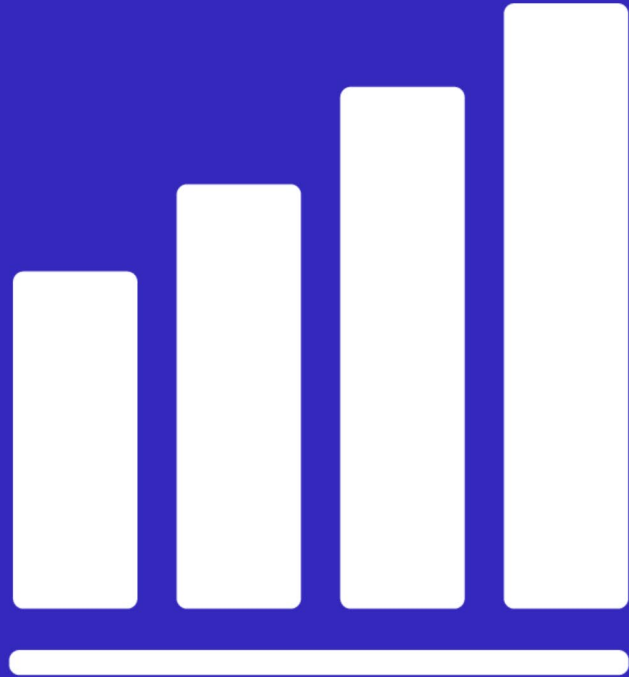
# Language Do's and Don'ts

## Avoid Saying

- × "Committed suicide"
- × "Failed" or "successful" attempt

## Say

- ✓ "Died by suicide"
- ✓ "Ended their life"
- ✓ "Killed themselves"
- ✓ "Suicide attempt" or "death by suicide"



# Scope of the Problem

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**Over 800,000  
people die  
by suicide  
each year.**

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**Someone dies  
by suicide every  
40 seconds.**

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**In the U.S.  
suicide is the  
10th leading  
cause of death.**

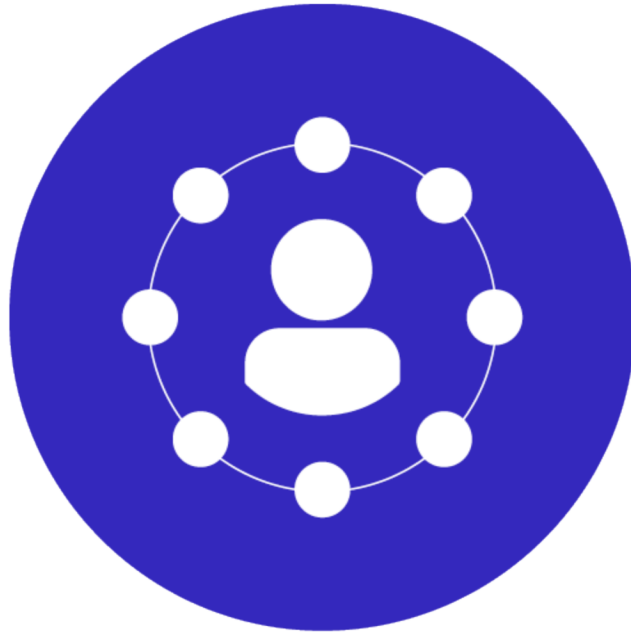
In 2018: 48,344 people died  
by suicide.

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**For every  
suicide...  
25 others  
attempt.**

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**Suicide impacts  
individuals and  
communities.**

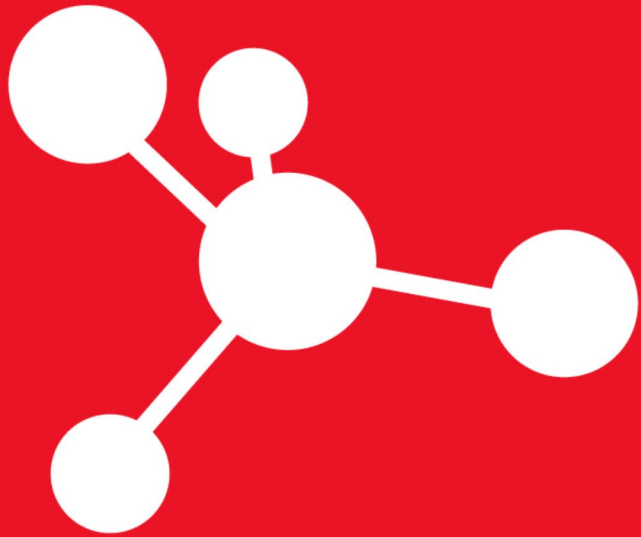


## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM



**Suicide has  
an economic  
impact.**

\$69 billion per year in the  
United States.



**Research**



# **Why do people take their own lives?**

There is no single cause, but  
rather multiple intersecting  
factors.

## RESEARCH



**The large majority of people who die by suicide have a mental health condition contributing to their death.**

## RESEARCH



**1 in 4 people  
will experience  
a mental health  
condition, and  
most do not go on  
to die by suicide.**



# Physical Differences

The brains of people who die by suicide differ from those who die from other causes in both structure and function.

## RESEARCH



**Most people who are suicidal are ambivalent about taking their life.**



# The Perspective of a Suicidal Person

- Crisis point has been reached
- Desperate to escape pain
- Thinking becomes limited



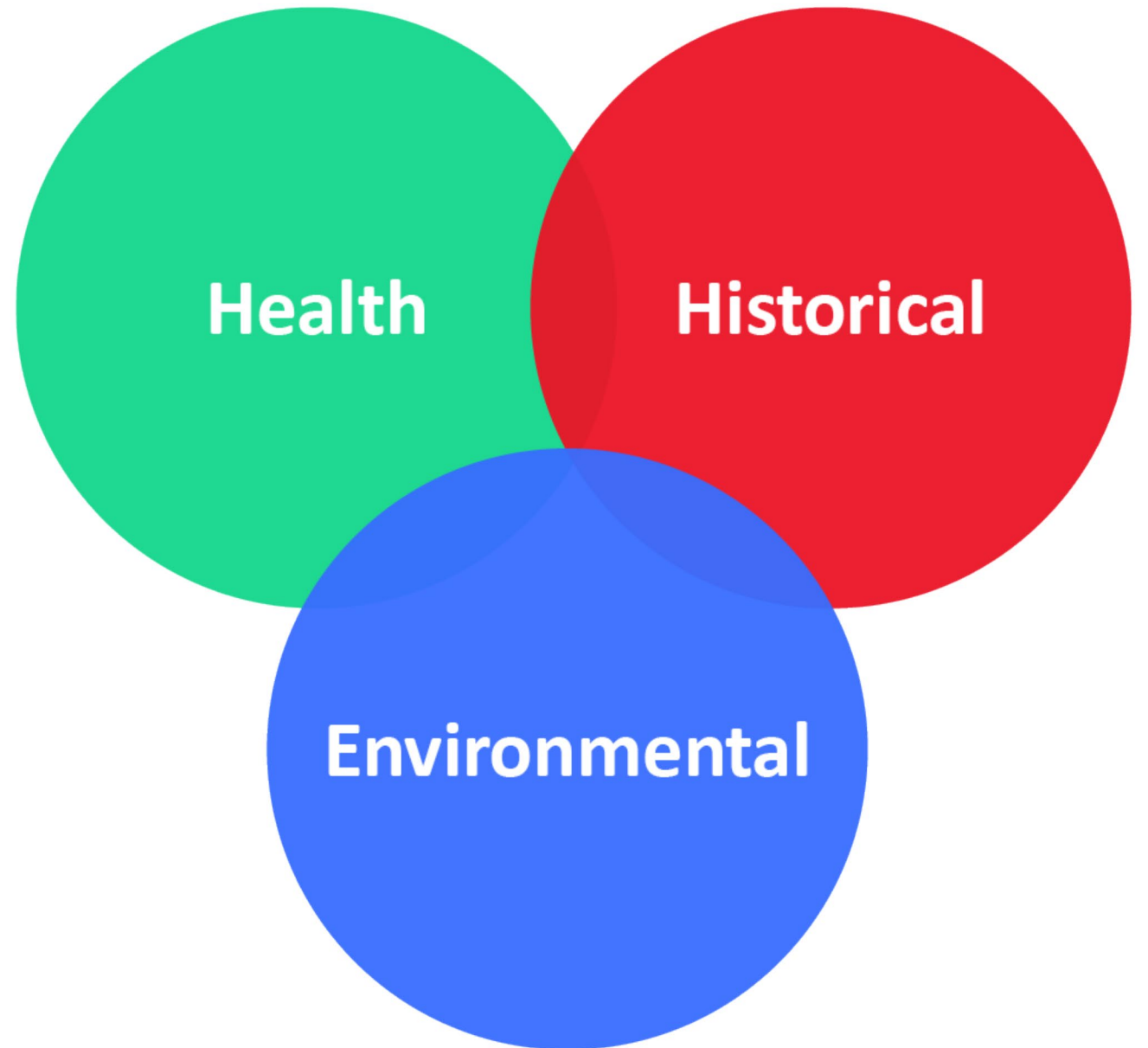
## RESEARCH



**Who is at risk?**

**RESEARCH**

# **Risk Factors**

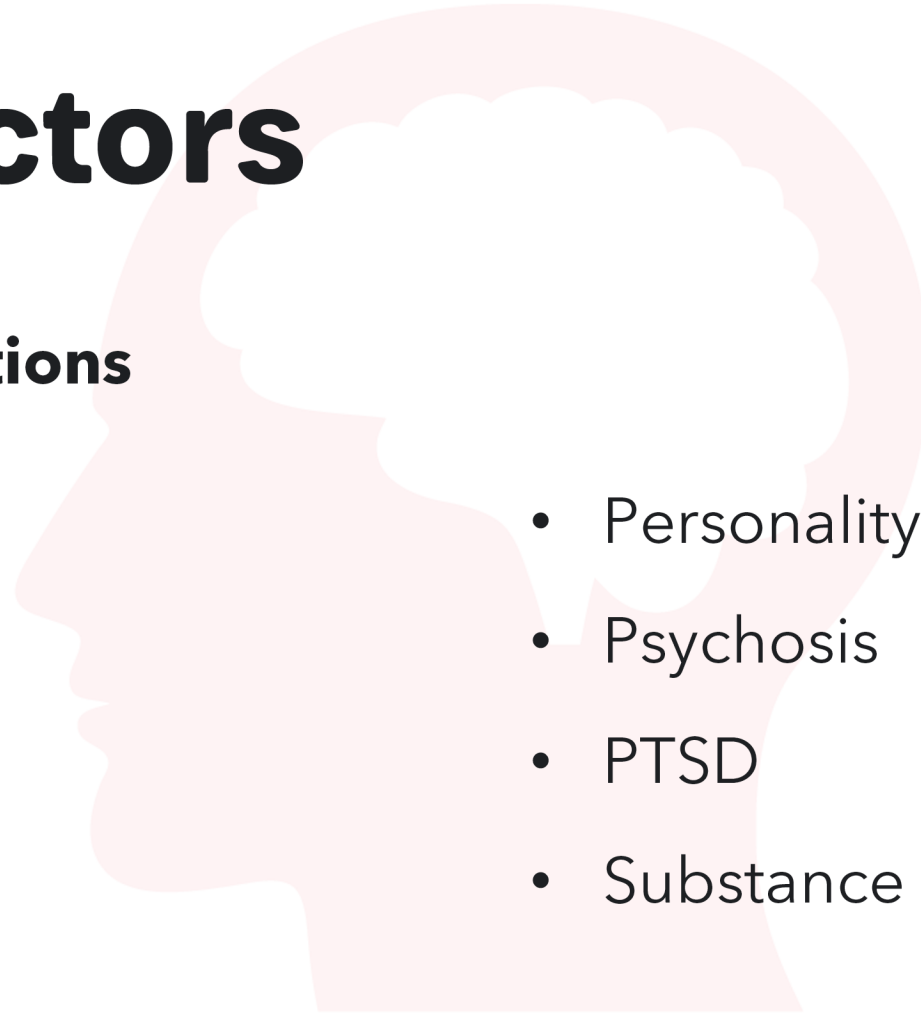


## RESEARCH

# Health Factors

## Mental Health Conditions

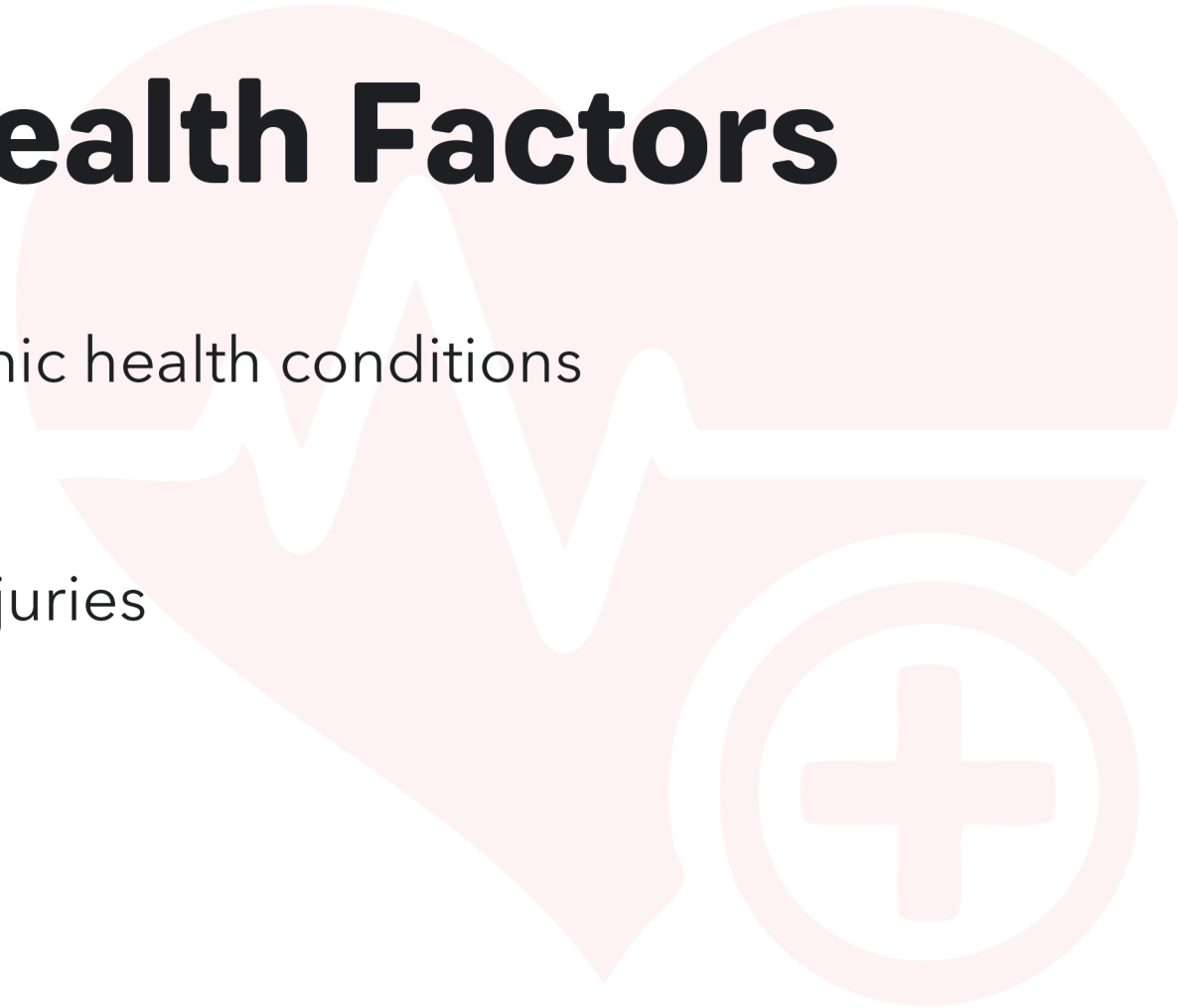
- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Eating disorders
- Personality disorders
- Psychosis
- PTSD
- Substance use disorders



## RESEARCH

# Other Health Factors

- Serious or chronic health conditions
- Chronic pain
- Serious head injuries




## RESEARCH

# Historical Factors

- Family history of suicide
- Family history of mental health conditions
- Childhood abuse
- Previous suicide attempts
- Loss

## RESEARCH

# Environmental Factors

- Access to lethal means
  - Exposure/contagion
  - Prolonged stress
  - Stressful life event
- 

# RESEARCH

**What others see:**



**What they may not know:**



**Genetic risk**



**Depression**



**Prolonged stress at work**



**Drinking more than usual**

**RESEARCH**

# The Importance of Research



**Biomarkers**



**Psychotherapies**



**Interventions**



**Medication**





**65**

**Seniors  
& Suicide**

## SENIORS & SUICIDE



**Suicide rates are higher among Americans 65 and older, especially for men.**

## SENIORS & SUICIDE

**Suicide attempts in adults  
over 65 are more likely to  
result in death.**

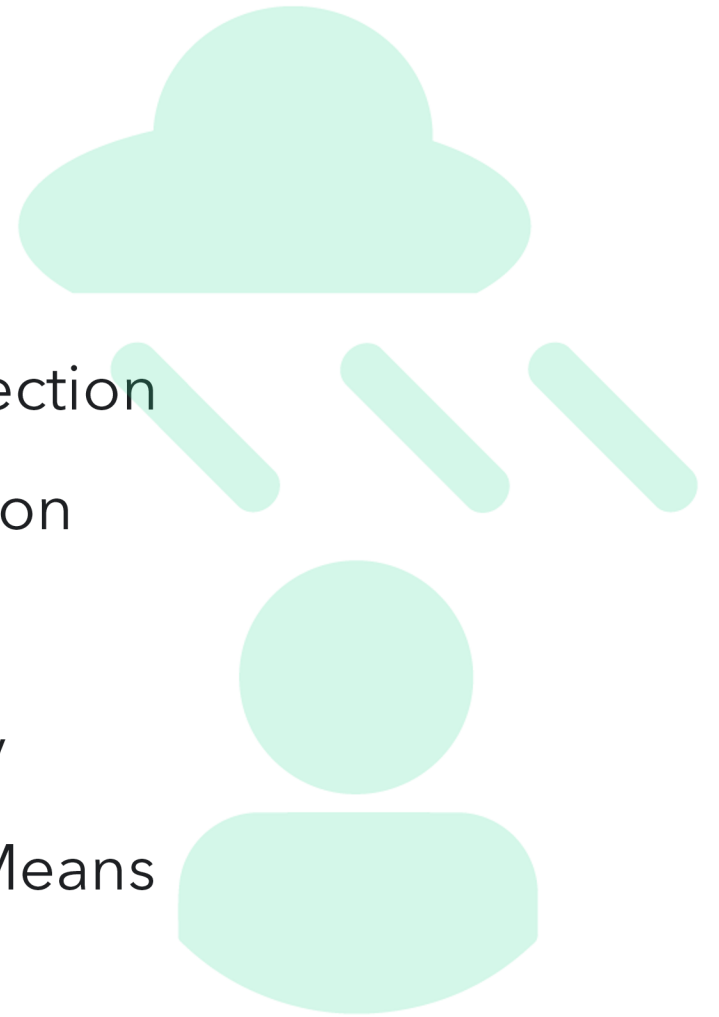
## SENIORS & SUICIDE

**Depression is not a natural  
part of growing older.**

# Risk Factors

- Isolation
- Significant losses
- Changes in health
- Loss of autonomy
- Role changes

- Disconnection
- Depression
- Disease
- Disability
- Deadly Means



# Protective Factors

- Companionship
- Compassion
- Appreciation
- Shared Hobbies
- Mental health care
- Social support



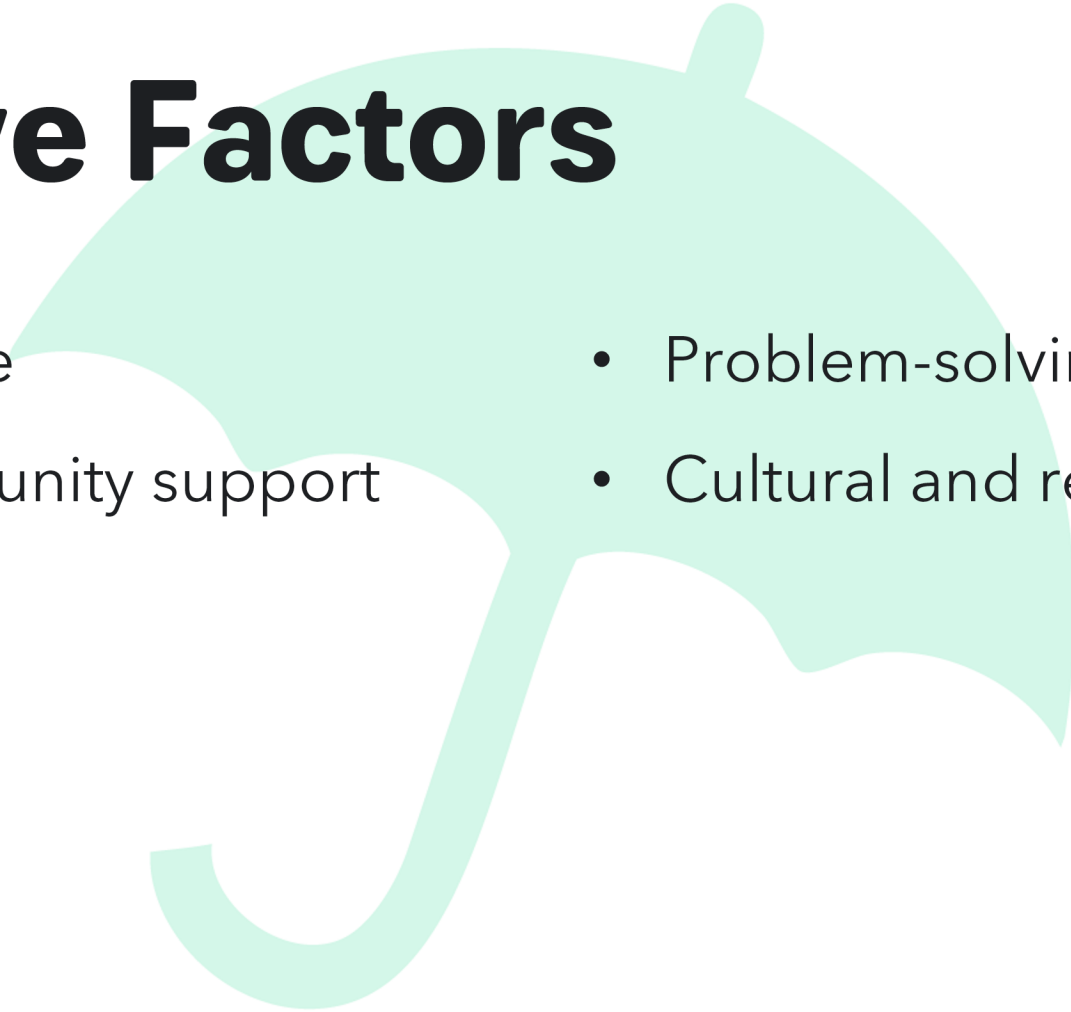


**Prevention**

## PREVENTION

# Protective Factors

- Mental health care
- Family and community support
- Problem-solving skills
- Cultural and religious beliefs





## PREVENTION



**Mental health care  
is an important  
ingredient for  
preventing suicide.**

## PREVENTION



**We need a culture  
where everyone  
knows to be smart  
about mental health.**

## PREVENTION

# Being Proactive About Mental Health

**Make mental health a priority.**

- See a doctor or mental health professional
- Get an evaluation
- Discuss treatment options
- Find what works best for the individual



## PREVENTION



**The law requires insurance plans to cover mental health services the same as physical health services.**

## PREVENTION

# Self Care Strengthens Mental Health



**Exercise**



**Sleep**



**Healthy diet**



**Stress management**

## PREVENTION



**Support for loss survivors and those with lived experience.**

## PREVENTION



**The most important thing you can put between a suicidal person and their way of ending their life is time.**

## PREVENTION



**Limiting access  
to means  
prevents suicide.**



## PREVENTION

# Limiting Access to Means



**CO sensors in cars**



**Blister packaging  
for medication**



**Barriers on bridges**



**Secure firearms**



**What You  
Can Do**

**SUPPORT**



**Have a  
Conversation**

## SUPPORT



**Watch for the  
warning signs**



**Reach out**



**Seek help**

**SUPPORT**

# **Suicide Warning Signs**



**Talk**



**Behavior**



**Mood**

## SUPPORT

# Talk

- Ending their lives
  - Having no reason to live
  - Being a burden to others
  - Feeling trapped
  - Unbearable pain
- 

## SUPPORT

# Behavior

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Issues with sleep
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Looking for a way to kill themselves
- Giving away possessions



## SUPPORT

# Mood

- Depression
- Apathy
- Rage
- Irritability





## SUPPORT

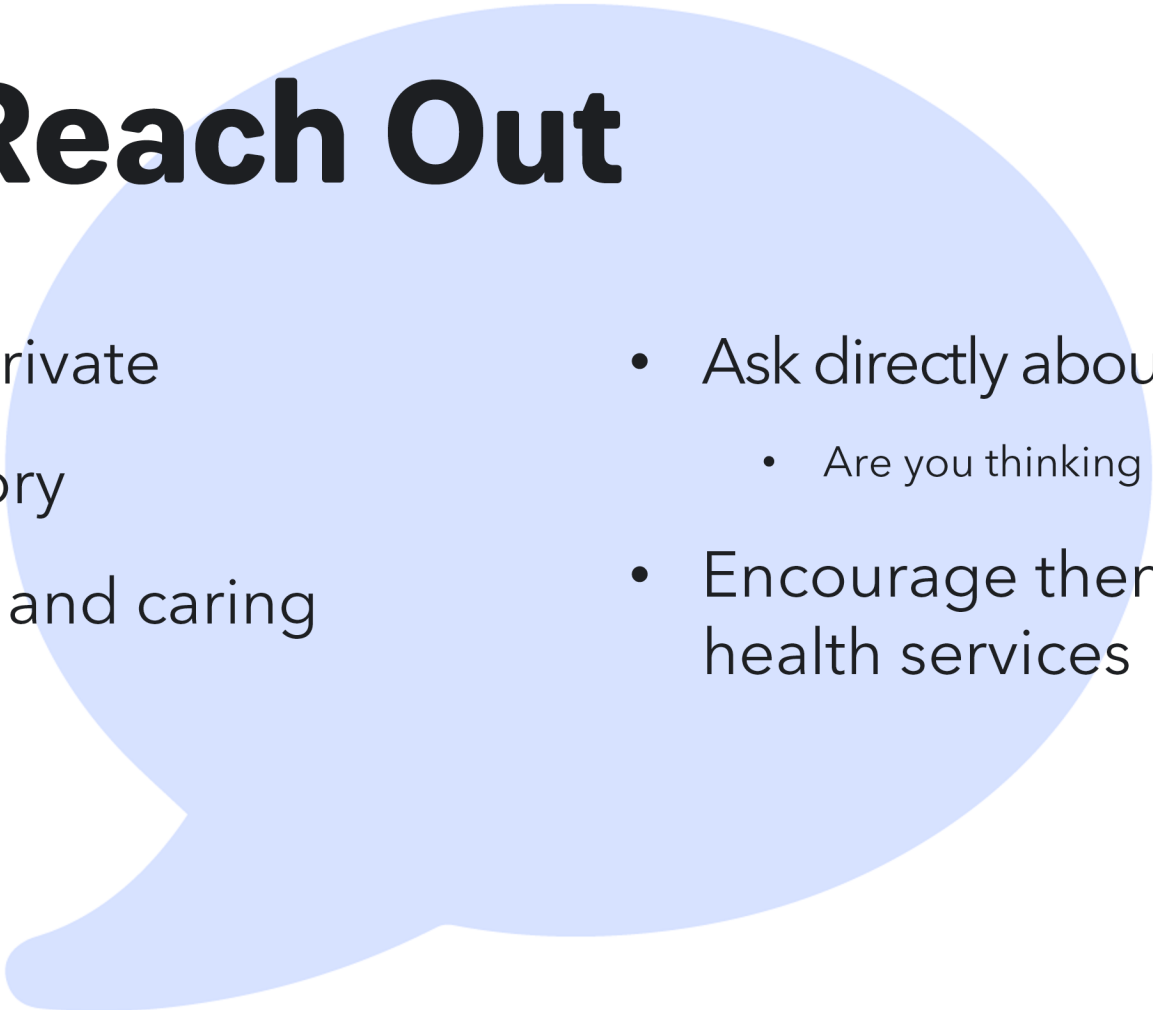


# **Trust your gut.**

Assume you're the only one  
who is going to reach out.

## SUPPORT

# How to Reach Out

- 
- Talk to them in private
  - Listen to their story
  - Express concern and caring
  - Ask directly about suicidal thoughts
    - Are you thinking of ending your life?
  - Encourage them to seek mental health services

## SUPPORT



**Avoid minimizing  
their feelings.**

**Avoid trying to  
convince them life  
is worth living.**

**Avoid advice  
to fix it.**

## SUPPORT

**If you think they might make an attempt soon.**



**Stay with them**



**Help them  
secure or  
remove lethal  
means**



**Escort them to  
mental health  
services**

**SUPPORT**



**Suicide Prevention  
Lifeline:  
Call 1-800-273-TALK**

**Crisis Text Line:  
Text TALK to 741741**

**SUPPORT**



**For Emergencies  
Call 911**

SUPPORT



**We can create a  
culture that's  
smart about mental  
health and  
suicide prevention.**





**Help us improve our program by  
completing the feedback form.**

**Visit [afsp.org/TSLparticipant](https://afsp.org/TSLparticipant)**



**@afspnational**

[afsp.org/TalkSavesLives](https://afsp.org/TalkSavesLives)



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