

# depression

While being depressed is often a factor in elder suicide, it is not an inevitable consequence of growing old. Depression in older adults often goes unrecognized, which is particularly unfortunate considering that depressed people of all ages generally respond well to treatment.

## Myths About Aging

- Older people cope better with loss because they have had more experience with it.
- Ignoring grief and loss makes the pain go away quicker.
- Depression is a “normal” part of aging.
- People with dementia cannot get depressed.
- Older people do not contribute anything to society. They are a burden.
- All older people are the same, regardless of health background or economic circumstances.

**None of these statements about aging are true. These inaccurate beliefs can prevent people from seeking help.**

# warning signs

Most people who are feeling desperate enough to consider suicide give clues about how they're feeling. You can help by learning the following risk-of-suicide warning signs.



## Verbal Statements:

- “Things will never get better.”
- “I’m a burden to everyone around me.”
- “No one would miss me if I were gone.”
- “I want to kill myself.”
- “I feel hopeless.”

## Physical Changes:

- Losing or gaining weight quickly.
- Suddenly not caring about appearance or cleanliness.

## Acting Differently:

- Changes in mood. This can include a sudden mood lift after a down period as well as being more withdrawn, anxious, or sad.
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits.
- Suddenly taking more risks.
- Substance abuse.

## Samaritans

is a non-denominational, not-for-profit volunteer-based organization dedicated to reducing the incidence of suicide by befriending individuals in crisis and educating the community about effective prevention strategies.

Samaritans Statewide Helpline  
**1-877-870-HOPE (4673)**  
Call or Text Samaritans



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To **volunteer** or **donate** please visit our website at **samaritanshope.org**



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## Taking Care of Yourself & Others

Every year, over 28,000 older adults make a suicide attempt, over 7,000 older adults die by suicide, and more than 40,000 people are intimately affected by losing someone they love to suicide. The information in this brochure will help you support one another and develop suicide prevention skills.

## Listen

If you know someone who might be thinking about suicide, you can help just by listening. Very often, people who think suicide is a choice feel they have no other options, that they have no control over their lives, and that no one cares about them.

### Listening to people considering suicide does the following:

- Shows that you care.
- Gives them a greater sense of control.
- Helps them feel connected to someone else.
- Makes them feel less alone.

### DO:

- Give them all of your attention.
- Tell them that you care and that you are glad that they are talking to you.
- Ask open-ended questions to learn how they are feeling.
- Validate their feelings.

### DON'T:

- Try to solve their problems.
- Give advice if they don't ask for it.
- Say their actions or feelings are wrong or unimportant.
- Tell them about your own problems.

### Need help or have questions about supporting a friend?

Call Samaritans Statewide Helpline:  
**1-877-870-HOPE (4673)**

## Ask

After you have listened, ask if they are thinking about suicide. Asking about suicide can be scary and hard, but it is the only way to find out how much danger they are in. It also lets them know it is safe to talk to you. Many people are afraid to talk about suicide. They fear the reaction of others, but it is often a great relief simply to have someone recognize their pain. Asking about thoughts of suicide will NOT suggest the idea to someone or encourage someone to take their life.

### Ask the question directly:

“Do you sometimes feel so bad that you think about suicide?”

“It sounds like things are pretty rough right now and I'm concerned about you. Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

### If the answer is “yes”:

- Stay calm. Even if this makes you feel scared or mad, don't let it show. Keep listening and let the person know you care.



### • Ask:

“Have you thought about how you might do it?” (Is there a plan?)

“Do you already have that? Can you get it?” (Are the means available, such as guns or pills?)

“Have you decided when you will do this?” (Have they set a time?)

### If the answer is “no”:

- Keep listening. Don't tell the person you are glad or relieved that they are not thinking about suicide. Their feelings may change and then they may feel uncomfortable telling you when they need you the most.

## Get Help

Anyone can feel suicidal, but the feeling doesn't last forever. Getting help for someone who is feeling suicidal can save a life. Never try to help a suicidal person by yourself. A suicidal person needs a lot of attention and support—more than any one person can give. The more helpers the better. Get help from:

- A counselor or therapist.
- A teacher or guidance counselor.
- The local hospital emergency room.
- A nurse or doctor.
- Samaritans – **1-877-870-HOPE (4673)**

It is important that the suicidal person talks directly with one or more of these kinds of helpers. You may also find it helpful to speak with one of these services as well.

### Some things to remember:

- If the first helper doesn't give you what you need, try another.
- If the suicidal person won't agree to get help, tell someone right away. It is better to have him or her mad at you, but alive.

### Emergency Help

- Stay calm: This can feel scary or out of control. But the person you are helping feels even more out of control and needs you to be calm.
- Don't leave a suicidal person alone. Stay or find someone who can. Most people won't attempt suicide unless they're alone.
- Call 911.