

# depression & suicide

**W**e have all had days where we feel down. A failed project at work or an argument with a friend can cause you to feel blue. But when you feel down or low for multiple days or weeks, you may be experiencing depression. **Clinical depression** is defined as feeling down for an extended amount of time. Lack of sleep, difficulty concentrating, hopelessness about the future, or even thoughts of suicide are common symptoms of clinical depression. Untreated depression or mental illness is a major cause of suicide. An important way to take part in suicide prevention is to understand the issues that concern those in crisis and to help change the conversation around suicide and mental health.

## Spot the Warning Signs

People who are contemplating suicide can show many signs, but here are some of the common ones to look for.

- *Talking about wanting to die and/or talking about death often*
- *Starting a will and getting their affairs in order*
- *Withdrawing from social contact and wanting to be left alone*
- *Increased use of alcohol or drugs*

In the 2019 National Health Survey, 4.7% of adults aged 18 and over reported regular feelings of depression. In 2020 that grew to **6% or 14.8 million!**

SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

## Take Action

Five action steps for communicating with a friend or family member who may be contemplating self-harm:

1. **Start a non-judgmental conversation. Ask “Are you thinking about suicide?”**
2. **Keep them safe from lethal items or places.**
3. **Be there, listen to them carefully, and acknowledge their feelings.**
4. **Help them connect with resources and professionals.**
  - *Make It OK provides support in dealing with stigma of mental health at [makeitok.org](http://makeitok.org).*
  - *The NIMH Helpline can be reached Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. ET, at 1-866-615-6464 or by email at [nimhinfo@nih.gov](mailto:nimhinfo@nih.gov).*
  - *Right Direction crisis hotline provides free information, tools, and resources to help raise awareness about depression in the workplace and demystify the symptoms and treatment options at [www.rightdirectionforme.com/for-you/](http://www.rightdirectionforme.com/for-you/) or call 800-273-8255.*
  - *The Trevor Project supports LGBTQ+ at [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org) and 866-488-7386.*
  - *The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7 in the United States. Go to [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) or call 1-800-273-8255. Beginning July 16, 2022, 988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the NSPL.*
5. **Stay connected with them and follow up often.**

