

## **The American Association of Suicidology gives these recommendations for helping and understanding the suicidal individual:**

### **□ Be Aware of the Facts**

- Suicide is preventable. Most individuals desperately want to live: they are just unable to see alternatives to their problems.
- Most suicidal individuals give definite warnings of their suicidal intentions, but others are either unaware of the significance of these warnings or do not know how to respond to them.
- Talking about suicide does not cause someone to be suicidal.
- Approximately 31,000 Americans kill themselves every year. The number of suicide attempts is much greater and often results in serious injury.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15-24, and it is the eighth leading cause of death among all persons.
- Suicide cuts across all age, economic, social, and ethnic boundaries.
- Firearms are currently the most utilized method of suicide.
- Surviving family members not only suffer the trauma of losing a loved one to suicide, but also are themselves at higher risk for suicide and emotional problems.

### **□ Ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide**

- Be aware. Learn the warning signs.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Ask if he/she is thinking about suicide.
- Be direct. Talk openly and freely about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow for expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad.
- Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Don't dare him/her to do it.
- Don't give advice by making decisions for someone else to tell them to behave differently.
- Don't ask "why." This encourages defensiveness.
- Offer empathy, not sympathy.
- Don't act shocked. This creates distance.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available, do not offer glib reassurance: it only proves you don't understand.
- Take action! Remove means (i.e. firearm or pills)! Get help from individuals or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

**For more information on suicide and warning signs of suicide call 356-2880  
or look on the internet at [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org) or [www.aacp.org](http://www.aacp.org)**

**If you or someone you know is suicidal you can call:**

**1-800-SUICIDE (800-784-2433) Hope Line Network**

Brought to you by the  
Suicide Prevention, Awareness, Resources & Education (SPARE) Committee,  
Alpena Noon Lions Club, Alpena Public Schools and  
Northeast Michigan Community Partnership