

CONNECTIONS

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Risk of Suicide

by National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Suicidal thoughts or behaviors are both damaging and dangerous and are therefore considered a psychiatric emergency. Someone experiencing these thoughts should seek immediate assistance from a health or mental health care provider. Having suicidal thoughts does not mean someone is weak or flawed.

According to the CDC, suicide rates have increased by 30% since 1999. Nearly 45,000 lives were lost to suicide in 2016 alone.

Know the Warning Signs

- Threats or comments about killing themselves, also known as suicidal ideation, can begin with seemingly harmless thoughts like “I wish I wasn’t here” but can become more overt and dangerous
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior
- Social withdrawal from friends, family and the community
- Dramatic mood swings
- Talking, writing or thinking about death
- Impulsive or reckless behavior

Is There Imminent Danger?

Any person exhibiting these behaviors should get care immediately:

- Putting their affairs in order and giving away their possessions
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Mood shifts from despair to calm
- Planning, possibly by looking around to buy, steal or borrow the tools they need to complete suicide, such as a firearm or prescription medication

If you are unsure, a licensed mental health professional can help assess risk.

If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or call 911 immediately.



Greetings City Employees!

September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day, and this newsletter combines information from two useful resources on the topic of suicide into one article, which will provide you and your family with general information about suicide, risk factors, warning signs, and navigating through the aftermath of a suicide attempt.

In addition to providing articles on various topics that relate to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, the EAP also conducts trainings on mental health related topics to City employees and departments when requested, one of which is suicide prevention.

We also wanted to provide you with ideas of how to find your passion, because having something you are passionate about in your life is something many people generally feel is a good thing, but not everyone thinks to step back and assess or identify those passions.

Another article included is how to cut your device distractions in this world of screens, and it includes tips that I too am working on! Finally, we wanted to thank all City employees who have been working so hard in the aftermath of the flooding. We thank you for your service!



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World Suicide Prevention Day

Working Together to Prevent Suicide

September 10, 2018



Risk Factors for Suicide

Research has found that more than half of people (54%) who died by suicide did not have a known mental health condition. A number of other things may put a person at risk of suicide, including:

- **A family history of suicide.**
- **Substance abuse.** Drugs and alcohol can result in mental highs and lows that exacerbate suicidal thoughts.
- **Intoxication.** More than one in three people who die from suicide are found to be currently under the influence.
- **Access to firearms.**
- **A serious or chronic medical illness.**
- **Gender.** Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are four times more likely to die by suicide.
- **A history of trauma or abuse.**
- **Prolonged stress.**
- **Isolation.**
- **Age.** People under age 24 or above age 65 are at a higher risk for suicide.
- **A recent tragedy or loss.**
- **Agitation and sleep deprivation.**

Can Thoughts of Suicide Be Prevented?

Mental health professionals are trained to help a person understand their feelings and can improve mental wellness and resiliency. Depending on their training they can provide effective ways to help.

Psychotherapy such as cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior therapy, can help a person with thoughts of suicide recognize unhealthy patterns of thinking and behavior, validate troubling feelings, and learn coping skills.

Medication can be used if necessary to treat underlying depression and anxiety and can lower a person's risk of hurting themselves. Depending on the person's mental health diagnosis, other medications can be used to alleviate symptoms.

Attempt Survivors

by SAMHSA

Coping with the deep hurt after surviving a suicide attempt and finding hope is possible. The Lifeline is available for support 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255.

How to Take Care of Yourself

You can recover from a suicide attempt. It takes time to heal both physically and emotionally, but healing and help can happen.

- **Find an activity you enjoy:** Taking care of yourself is an important part of your recovery. Your "self-care" activities can be anything that makes you feel good about yourself.
- **Talk to someone:** Silence isn't strength. Don't keep suicidal feelings to yourself. Lean on your **support network, find a therapist or a support group, or get in touch with the Lifeline.**
- **Make a safety plan:** Have a step-by-step plan ready for if/when you feel depressed, suicidal, or in crisis, so you can start at step one and continue through the steps until you feel safe.
- **Find a counselor:** Suicide attempt survivors and researchers who study suicide recommend counseling to help find long-term strategies to ease the emotional pain that led to your attempt.

How to Help

- **Ask and listen:** Be an active part of your loved ones' support systems and check in with them often. If they show any **warning signs** for suicide, be direct. Tell them it's OK to talk about suicidal feelings. Practice **active listening techniques** and let them talk without judgment.
- **Be understanding:** Do not make them feel guilty. Don't make it about you. Listen and be as understanding as possible.
- **Give a hug:** Let them know that they are still loved and that you still want them in your life. Sometimes, a hug can say more than a thousand words.
- **Get them help and take care of yourself:** Don't be afraid to get your loved one the help they might need. The Lifeline is always here to talk or chat, both for crisis intervention and to support allies. Helping a loved one through a crisis is never easy. You might want to talk about your feelings with another friend or a counselor.



World Suicide Prevention Day
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Loss Survivors

by SAMHSA

If you have lost a loved one to suicide, you are not alone. There are resources available to help survivors of suicide loss cope.

How to Take Care of Yourself

A loved one's suicide is a challenging, confusing, and painful experience. If you're struggling, the Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 is always here to help.

- **Find a support group:** You don't have to cope with your loss alone. There are support groups specifically for those who have lost a loved one to suicide.
- **Do what feels right to you:** Don't feel pressured to talk right away. If you choose to discuss your loss, speaking can give your friends and family the opportunity to support you in an appropriate way.
- **Write:** You may find it helpful to write your feelings or to write a letter to your lost loved one. This can be a safe place for you to express some of the things you were not able to say before the death.
- **Ask for help:** Don't be afraid to let your friends provide support to you, or to look for resources in your community such as therapists, co-workers, or family members.

How to Help

Supporting someone who has lost a loved one can feel overwhelming and complex. There are ways to help.

- **Accept their feelings:** Loss survivors grapple with complex feelings after the death of a loved one by suicide, such as fear, grief, shame, and anger. Accept their feelings and be compassionate and patient, and provide support without criticism.
- **Use sensitivity during holidays and anniversaries:** Events may bring forth memories of the lost loved one, and emphasize this loved one's absence.
- **Use the lost loved one's name:** Use the name of the person who has died when talking to survivors. This shows that you have not forgotten this important person, and can make it easier to discuss a subject that is often stigmatized.



Cutting Our Device Distractions In the World of Screens

As teens need help disconnecting, parents realize their own struggle to unplug.

by Sue Scheff, *Psychology Today* (Used with permission of the author)

Whether it's the *beep* of a text message or *ding* of a notification of a social platform, no matter what age you are, there's a very good chance you're likely digitally connected to your cell phone—more than you realize.

From the moment the majority of teens wake-up (72 percent), according to a recent **Pew Research survey**, they are checking their messages or notifications. Being without their device, over half (56 percent) felt at least one of these three emotions: loneliness, being upset or feeling anxious. Girls were more likely than boys to feel anxious or lonely.

It's all of us

Mom and dad are struggling too. Many parents (36 percent) admit they spend too much time on their cell phone while the majority of their teens (51 percent) say they often find their parent distracted by their screen when they're trying to have a conversation with them.

When it comes to *on the job*, 15 percent of parents say they lose focus at work because they are distracted by their phone. That is nearly double the share of teens (8 percent) who say they often lose focus in school due to their own cellphones.

Curbing the screen

It seems that most are in agreement they want to reduce their obsession to their beeps, dings, bells and whistles, and like most diets—it can be easier when you do them together.

Truly, it does start at the top. Parents need to know they have to *lead by example* and this means cutting their screen time too.

References

➤ **PEW Research Survey: How Teens and Parents Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions**

➤ **Screen Education Nation Survey: Teen Smartphone Addiction**

1. **Turn off or limit your notifications.** These noises (even buzzes) can be stress triggers, not only for teens but even for adults. Make a habit of only checking in to your platforms several times a day.

Takeaway Tip: Go into your apps notifications under settings, turn off *all* notifications and manually select what apps you *need* to have on.

2. **Family contract.** Over a **quarter of teens** (26 percent) wish that someone (either their parent or school) would impose reasonable screen time limits on them. Is it time to have everyone sign and understand a **smartphone contract**, not only the young people? Don't forget mealtime means eating—not emails.

Takeaway Tip: By charging up the cell phones at night in one common living area, while everyone is sleeping, can reduce the chances of nighttime digital distraction (and everyone will probably get a better night's sleep).

3. **Family device-free time:** Make a diligent effort to have family time when everyone is disconnected and without their devices. From short trips to the mall to long days at the beach or even weekends without digital interruptions. You design your weekly device-free family time.

Takeaway Tip: Many families are bringing back *family game night*. From Scrabble to Monopoly, you can have old-fashioned fun without technology.

4. **The coffee break.** According to a **Screen Education National survey**, 69 percent of teens wish they could socialize in person rather than online with their friends. Make it a habit to meet your friends *regularly offline* to have face-to-face time with them. Encourage your kids to do the same, and remind them when people are in front of you, screens shouldn't be dividing them.

Takeaway Tip: Have a phone conference lined up? If it's local, make it a coffee or lunch meeting.

5. **It can wait.** The **statistics** are overwhelming. It's almost on a weekly basis that we will read a headline about someone that is killed or seriously injured from distracted driving. These accidents are completely preventable yet every day you don't have to look far to witness someone driving distracted. Parents that text and drive are giving permission to their children to do the same, just by their actions. Teach your kids from the moment the car goes on, the device is off. You are the role model. **It can wait.**

Takeaway Tip: If you have to have your phone out while driving, turn off the volume and turn over the screen.

De-Escalation Tip of the Day: Respect Personal Space

By Emily Eilers, Crisis Prevention Institute

Last summer, the *Chicago Tribune* shared an op-ed bemoaning the increasing lack of personal space in restaurants. The trend of “European concept” café-style dining, paired with an urgency to turn over tables more rapidly, has resulted in an eatery phenomenon of packed, communal-style seating that in some cases leaves as little as eight inches between tables. In one incident, a restaurant critic found himself amazed by the softness of a particular establishment’s napkins—which was when he discovered he was actually using the cashmere scarf of the woman at the table next to him.

Even in a good-humored situation, you can’t avoid the awkwardness (or potential dry-cleaning expenses) of invading somebody else’s personal space. The current state of too-close-for-comfort restaurant encounters supports recent sociological research findings—what works in parts of southern Europe doesn’t necessarily go over so well in the United States or Asia. Culture, gender, age, and ethnicity are all factors when it comes to personal space—the accepted distance between two strangers in South America is probably too close for comfort for good friends in Scandinavia. A lack of personal space can add tension to even the most benign social or professional situation.

But you already knew this if you’ve ever had to take public transportation during rush hour, wait out a long TSA line at the airport, or attempted to do your Christmas shopping the morning after Thanksgiving.

CPI’s own extensive research indicates that not only should you err on the side of more personal space than less, but you should also try to stand at a slight angle to the person you’re attempting to de-escalate versus approach them head-on. We call it a *Supportive Stance*SM, in which staff try to keep at least 1.5 to three feet between themselves and the person in crisis. Not only does it help promote your collective safety, but it also defuses tension by communicating your non-threatening intent to somebody who is already feeling extremely vulnerable.

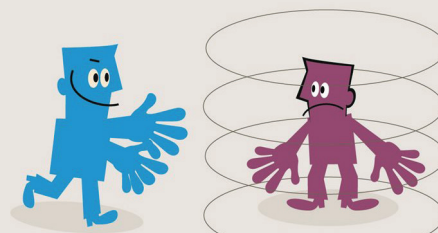
That’s why another top CPI de-escalation tip is: **Respect personal space.**

When it comes to de-escalation, the simplest and subtlest choices can often have profound transformational power over a stressful situation. When somebody gets in your face with an outburst, that initial rush of adrenaline may trigger an instinctual urge to shout back or lash out defensively. By training ourselves to not immediately become confrontational when challenged, and choosing instead to respect personal space, we create the potential for nonviolent crisis prevention and reduce the risk of escalation.

You can enhance a person’s feeling of safety and support in a moment of crisis by improving the quality of the personal space that you give them. You can ask any bystanders to leave or steer the situation to a safer, quieter location. You can ask others to assist you by removing potential hazards or weapons in the immediate vicinity. You can also let the person vent in that safe space, and expend the energy that would otherwise be channeled into a potentially harmful altercation.

Taking a step back makes room for a situation to correct its course. With training, you can be more mindful of the potential for prevention when faced with challenging behavior. We can keep each other safe and promote an environment of *Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*SM by making the simple choice to respect the personal space of an individual in crisis.

Respect personal space.



crisisprevention.com

CPI’s De-Escalation Techniques

Due to the variety and nature of the work that many City employees do, there are times when employees may find themselves in an uncomfortable situation with a member of the public, or perhaps even another employee, who may be struggling with their mental health, has a cognitive or intellectual status different from our own, sees reality differently than we do, has a medical condition or medication imbalance, or has found themselves in an uncomfortable situation and is expressing themselves very inappropriately or perhaps even aggressively in the workplace. While we recommend calling 911 if anyone feels immediately threatened or unsafe for themselves or someone else due to the words or actions of another person in their work environment, sometimes situations do not rise to the level of contacting law enforcement, or you may find yourself in a situation where you feel uncomfortable or threatened but are unable to distance yourself from the individual making you uncomfortable, confused, afraid, or angry. Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) is a widely utilized and useful resource that teaches employees and organizations how to de-escalate disruptive and assaultive behavior in safe, non-violent, and respectful way, and they have developed a list of Top Ten De-Escalation Tips which the EAP will be providing to you in this and upcoming newsletter articles. If you have more questions on de-escalation in the workplace, you can confidentially contact the EAP at 266-6561 or you can view upcoming trainings offered by Human Resources on their [training website](#).

Finding Your Passion

Can a job that's a drag become joyful?

by Beverly Flaxington, *Psychology Today* (Used with permission of the author)

If you don't like mysteries or animals, you've possibly never heard of Rita Mae Brown, novelist and author of the Mrs. Murphy mystery series. Most importantly, she is a person who loves what she does and makes a good living doing it.

Too many people work just for the paycheck. And the paycheck is important – there are kids to feed, rent to pay, and new shoes to buy when the old ones finally wear out. Everything is expensive, and having an income is critical to survival. In many cases, the message is that work should not be fun – weekends, or time off for vacation or personal days, is when you should have your fun. Work is, well, it's "work". It shouldn't be enjoyed; it's just something to get through on your journey to somewhere else.

The whole retirement industry is set up on this premise. Work hard, save a lot and someday when you can finally stop, you will be able to enjoy the fruits of your labor and kick back. Images of coffee on the deck, warm places in the winter, sailboats and time with grandkids come to mind. It can be a peaceful transition from a lifetime of work, but what if you could find joy and satisfaction long before you punch the last proverbial timesheet?

You can find your passion. For many people, they are stuck – can't take a risk and lose that paycheck when it keeps the lights on and feeds their families. But what if you could find joy in what you do right now? What if you could integrate your passion into your work and pave a new path forward? There are ways to find satisfaction even if you can't leave what you do today.

If you believe your work life is missing that sense of joie de vivre, maybe instead of dragging yourself in to wherever you need to go tomorrow, you could adopt a different perspective and start igniting your passion:

1. Start by thinking about what makes you happy. In life, people are always either moving toward a more positive place, or away from something they don't like. Unfortunately, when you get stuck in a rut at work, your focus becomes what you dislike about it. So, what does make you happy? It can be anything – the smiling face of your child, being helpful to others, discovering a new idea, taking on a challenge, going somewhere you love to be. Figure out what gets you upbeat and energized, and resolve to add it into your day somehow. But wait, you can't leave work to go to your favorite beach, right? Make the beach come to you – post a picture somewhere or pull it out of your wallet or purse a few times each day. Take the mental break to bring your attention toward that which you love.
2. Identify your strengths and areas of opportunity. What are you best at? What makes you feel like you have contributed and added value? Examine whether your current job allows you to make the most of what you do well and like to do. If not, find ways to incorporate these things. Take on a problem, fix something, talk to your boss about ways you can add more value. Everyone feels better about what they do when they are doing something they are good at. Find more opportunities in your daily life to contribute on your terms.
3. Start taking a course, teaching a course, volunteering, pursuing a hobby, engaging in part-time work – funnel your passion and interest into another area outside of your job if you can't find satisfaction in your current job. Whatever you are passionate about, find an outlet for that. There are so many places and opportunities to find what fuels you. Express yourself in other areas outside of your work or career. You might find that doing so leads to opportunities for a paying passion.
4. Talk to others about what they do and how they got into their job or career. Sometimes people say, "I don't know what I am passionate about." They have been beaten down by their job or boss, or become so stuck they can't see another way. Get out and talk to others. Have a rule – no complaining, no talking down about your current situation; rather, become inspired and uplifted by someone else's story. Be a sponge and learn about what others do to get ideas about what might be interesting to you.
5. Set a goal with specifics and timelines about where you want to be next year at this time. Instead of being in a continuous loop of dissatisfaction, write out where you want to go and what you want to be doing instead. The better you can picture it and describe it, the more your mind will want to move toward it. Focus on becoming more passionate, and design what that looks like to you.

"I believe you are your work. Don't trade the stuff of your life, time, for nothing more than dollars. That's a rotten bargain."

–Rita Mae Brown

Preparing Your Family for a Natural Disaster

Throughout the month of September, [FEMA](#) and more than 3,000 organizations—national, regional and local governments as well as private and public organizations—will support emergency preparedness efforts and encourage Americans to take action. With hurricane season upon us, now is as good a time as ever to make a preparedness plan for yourself, your family and/or your friends.

In an emergency, every second counts. Your family may not be together if a disaster strikes, so knowing what types of disasters could affect your area, how you'll contact one another and how to reconnect if you become separated is crucial. Don't wait: Your EAP can connect you to a wealth of relevant resources, helping you get started on preparedness planning today.



WEBINAR

09.19.2018 12:00pm ET

REGISTER

It's Up to You: *Personal Safety is Your Responsibility*

2017 witnessed several tragic events involving active shooters that resulted in mass fatalities and injuries. Whether at home, work or in a public space, you are your first line of defense. How can you ensure your own safety as well as the safety of others? Join us as we discuss situational awareness as it relates to a full range of emergency situations.

Vivian Marinelli

Sr. Director of Crisis Management Services,
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*Thanks for reading,
we hope you found the information useful!*

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