MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN COOS HOSPITAL & HEALTH CENTER

QUALITY SYSTEM CERTIFICATION DNV ISO 9001

Senior Life Solutions®

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS: SUICIDE RISK AND HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE IN CRISIS



Every year, thousands of lives are lost to suicide, but many of these deaths are preventable. Recognizing the warning signs and knowing how to respond can make a critical difference. Whether you're a friend, family member, coworker, or caregiver, your awareness and support can be lifesaving.



Common Warning Sings of Suicidal Thoughts
While no single behavior guarantees someone is considering suicide, a combination of emotional, verbal, and behavioral signs often appears. Key warning signs include:

1.Talking About Death or Dying
Comments like “I wish I weren’t here” or “You’d be better off without me” should never be dismissed. Even vague references to death or self-harm warrant attention.

2.Withdrawing from Life
Pulling away from friends, family, and activities they once enjoyed can be a red flag. Isolation is a major risk factor, especially when combined with other signs.

See the next page for more warning signs and how to respond.

3.Changes in Mood or Behavior
Sudden shifts—such as irritability, anxiety, rage, or hopelessness—can indicate distress. In some cases, people may seem unusually calm after making a decision to end their life.

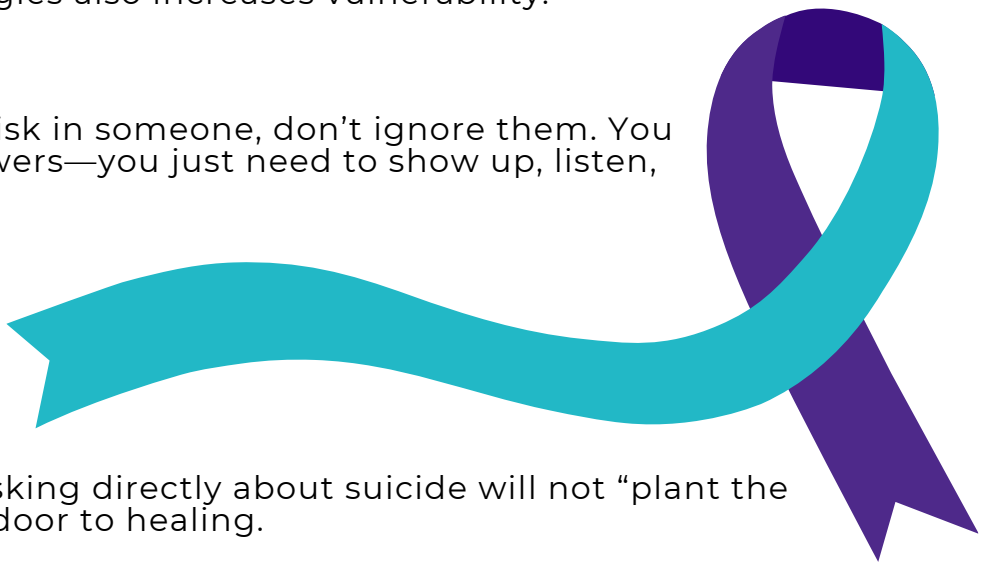
4.Risky or Self-Destructive Actions
Increased substance use, reckless driving, or other dangerous behaviors may be cries for help.

5.Expressing Hopelessness
Phrases like “Nothing will ever get better” or “There’s no point” reflect a dangerous loss of hope, often associated with suicidal ideation.

6.Previous Suicide Attempts or a Family History of Suicide
Past attempts are one of the strongest predictors of future risk. A family history of suicide or mental health struggles also increases vulnerability.

What You Can Do:

If you notice signs of suicidal risk in someone, don’t ignore them. You don’t need to have all the answers—you just need to show up, listen, and connect them to help.



Start the Conversation
Speak calmly and with care. Asking directly about suicide will not “plant the idea”—in fact, it can open the door to healing.

Listen Without Judgment
Let them talk. Resist the urge to offer quick solutions or minimize their feelings. Statements like “You’re not alone” or “That sounds really hard” can provide comfort.

Don’t Leave Them Alone If They’re at Immediate Risk
If someone is in danger of harming themselves, stay with them until help is secured. Call 911 or a local crisis line if needed.

Help Them Find Support
Encourage them to reach out to a mental health professional. You can offer to make the call with them, drive them to an appointment, or connect them to resources.

Follow Up
Check in regularly. Sometimes, knowing someone cares enough to follow up is a powerful reminder of hope.

WE CAN HELP.

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.
Call us today at (541) 329-1032