

Armed With Stats and Advice, Web Sites Hope to Prevent Suicide

Among hundreds of Web pages on suicide prevention, the message is eerily common: Friends and relatives of suicide victims often miss the warning signs due to lack of knowledge about how to react.

Over the past few years, many professional and grassroots organizations have set out to fill the information gap with suicide prevention materials, but most of them warn there is no substitute for professional counseling.

Every 18 minutes another life is lost to suicide, according to [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention Web site](#).

Sponsored in part by the Center for Mental Health Services, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the site offers a wealth of resources on suicide prevention, but cautions it is only an introduction to medical counseling.

The site features over a dozen most frequently asked questions about suicide, providing behavior guidelines and insight on what triggers suicidal thoughts in people.

For example, people dependent on substances are proven to have multiple risk factors for suicide. In addition to being depressed, they are also likely to have social and financial problems, according to the site. Substance abuse can be common among people prone to be impulsive, and among people who engage in many types of high-risk behaviors that result in self-harm.

Suicide is a disease that cuts through all cultural and social levels of modern society, according to studies worldwide.

“At a small-town newspaper in Southeastern Wisconsin we had a rule about

covering suicides: don't," read a statement on ["Living With Suicide. Shared Experiences and Voices of Loss,"](#) a Web site developed by PBS.

Giving voice to suicide survivors and loved ones of people who committed suicide, the site represents a network of highly emotional personal stories.

Addressing visitors who may have suicidal thoughts, the site strongly suggests contact with local crisis centers.

Most suicidal persons desperately want to live, but they are unable to see alternatives to their problems, according to www.suicidology.org, a site of the American Association of Suicidology in Washington, D.C.

While most suicidal people offer warnings of their suicidal thoughts, those closest to them are either unaware of such warnings or do not know how to respond to them, the site maintains.

"Suicide is not chosen, it happens when pain exceeds resources for coping with pain," read an introduction to www.metanoia.org, a site sponsored by the Samaritans, a non-profit organization providing confidential support to despairing people, according to the site's disclaimer.

Starting a virtual conversation with an unknown visitor, Web sites attempt to help people reason their way out of committing suicide.

"Put some distance between your suicidal feelings and suicidal action," read metanoia.org. "Even if it's just 24 hours. You have already done it for 5 minutes, just by reading this page."

People often turn to suicide because they are seeking relief from pain, the site reminds visitors. Remember that relief is a feeling. And you have to be alive to feel it. You will not feel the relief you so desperately seek, if you are dead.

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