



SOCIAL SERVICES

SUICIDE

Approximately 250,000 young people between the ages of 15-24 make a suicide attempt each year. Five thousand of those attempts result in death.

In studies of human traits that often lead to suicide, three words crop up again and again: worthlessness, helplessness, and hopelessness. There is no single reason why a person commits suicide. The causes are complex and differ from individual to individual. Generally, persons attempt suicide when made to feel alone or worthless and unloved. They have become isolated and are unable to cope with life and stress. When things go bad, most people still have the belief and the hope that they will get better. Lack of that belief and to have no hope takes away the reason for living.

The suicide attempt is often a way of calling for help, a way of letting others know how bad things are. Fortunately, the individual almost always communicates these feelings in many ways before acting. People contemplating suicide usually give clues of their intent. Recognition of these warnings is the key to prevention.

Four out of five people who commit suicide have tried it or threatened it previously. Don't dismiss the incident as "getting attention". People who unsuccessfully attempt suicide often try again unless their "cry for help" is heard.

Most suicides are preventable, not by hiding razor blades and pills, but by offering a person support, understanding and compassion. Your efforts in helping the suicidal person and in making sure that professional help is obtained may save a life. The common belief that suicide prevention is only temporary and that the person will eventually take his or her life away is just a myth. People have a will to live, a will that can once again become dominant. With proper guidance or treatment, the hopelessness can disappear and the potential suicide victim can be restored to full, active and happy living.

Some motivations for suicidal behavior among teenagers are:

WANTING TO:

- escape from an intolerable situation
- join a deceased loved one
- improve one's condition
- gain attention
- manipulate others
- be punished
- avoid being punished
- control when death will occur
- end an unresolvable conflict
- destroy the "internalized other"
- become a martyr
- punish the survivors
- Wanting revenge
- Responding to a voice during a "command hallucination".

Suicide among American Indian adolescents has increased 200 - 300 percent in the last 20 years. Suicide has become the second most frequent cause of death in the 10 to 20 year old age group.

There are a number environmental factors which have been identified as contributing to suicide among adolescents. Some of these factors are specific to Native American youth:

The breakdown of Tribal traditions. Most studies of American Indian adolescent suicide show that where tradition is strong, the Tribe's customs, religious ceremonies, and healing methods give the adolescent a feeling of security and a sense of belonging. Additionally, the various ceremonial rites tie adolescents to adults and charge the adolescent with specific duties and obligations.

Other factors that contribute to the increase of suicides among Native American teens include:

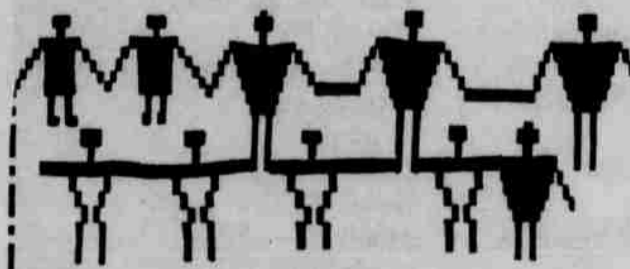
- The lack of effective adult role models.
- Having alcoholic parents
- Coming from a broken home
- Failure in school
- Unemployment

Another important environmental factor which may contribute to the suicide rate among Native American youth is adoption in which the Indian child has been placed in a non-Indian family. These children often feel rootless.

In adolescence, when they leave the non-Indian family, they find they are neither white or Indian. This rootless feeling leads to acute hopeless, helpless feelings. The result is a suicide rate among white adopted Native American adolescents that is twice that found on any reservation.

The holidays tend to bring out these feelings of loneliness and desperation. If someone you know seems to be having feelings described here, the best thing you can do for them is to help them make contact with mental health professionals.

We should not ignore any signs of suicidal behavior. By showing love, support and compassion we could just be saving a life.



CHRISTMAS BASKETS

Anyone in need of a food basket at Christmas time, or knows of someone who needs one, feel free to contact Social Services at the Tribal Office at: 879-5211, and we will do our best to make arrangements with the appropriate agency.

SUICIDE PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Holidays can be a time of great stress and anxiety. The suicide rate experiences an increase during these times.

The Tribal Health Department, along with Social Services, have devised a way to help you get through the holidays in a frame of mind that will let you enjoy them.

On December 17th, at 1:30 in the afternoon come to the health clinic and learn how to reduce stress and listen to a special speaker, Rick Synowski, on SUICIDE PREVENTION. Synowski is a child therapist with Polk County Mental Health, and specializes in suicide prevention.

The author of the following had a good friend named Annie. He wrote song to tell Annie's story, hoping that others would hear this song and save them the pain of having a young person close to them commit suicide.

IT'S TOO LATE FOR ANNIE

*No one ever noticed Annie weeping,
People all around, but she was all alone.
Momma's got her meetings, Daddy's got his job.
No one's got the time, so Annie's on her own.*

*No one ever knew her desperation.
People couldn't hear her cry out silently.
Locked inside the bathroom she grabs a jar of pills.
The medicine that cures, becomes the poison that kills.*

*Now it's too late for Annie.
She's gone away for good, it's too late for Annie.*

*Sadness fills the heart of Annie's family.
Daddy tries to comfort Momma, uselessly.
Hope she knew they loved her,
but they really didn't know,
They just want to know why did their baby go.*

*But it's too late for Annie, she's gone away for good.
There's so much we would tell her,
now we wish we could,
But it's too late for Annie.*

*If only we could know her situation.
We could have tried to stop this useless tragedy.
Annie's lost forever, never to be found.
There are lots of others like her all around.*

*And it's not too late for Annie, she could be next to you.
Don't miss the chance to tell her, before her life is through.*

*We've got to tell her that we love her,
Tell her that we care.
Tell her we can help her,
And her burdens share.*

It's not too late.