

Suicide Warning Signs – Quick-Reference Checklist

This checklist compiles the most consistently cited warning signs from the CDC, NIMH, AFSP, and WHO. Any single sign doesn't confirm risk, but the more that appear—especially together—the higher the concern. If several items are present, seek professional help immediately (call or text 988 in the U.S., or use your local crisis line).

1. Verbal or Written Red Flags

- Talking or posting about wanting to die, kill oneself, or not being alive
- Expressing hopelessness or 'no reason to live'
- Talking about unbearable emotional or physical pain
- Saying they feel trapped or like a burden to others
- Saying 'goodbye' or giving final messages

2. Behavioral & Observable Actions

- Looking for ways to access lethal means (firearms, pills, rope)
- Increasing substance use (alcohol or drugs)
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or activities
- Extreme mood swings or sudden calm after severe distress
- Changes in sleep (sleeping too little or too much)
- Giving away prized possessions or putting affairs in order
- Reckless or aggressive behavior

3. Situational Triggers & Risk Intensifiers

- Recent loss (relationship breakup, death, job, housing)
- Serious or chronic illness or pain
- Exposure to another person's suicide or sensational media coverage
- Financial or legal problems
- History of trauma, abuse, or discrimination
- Major life transitions without support (military discharge, migration)

Memory Aid: IS PATH WARM?

I – Ideation • S – Substance use

P – Purposelessness • A – Anxiety • T – Trapped • H – Hopelessness

W – Withdrawal • A – Anger • R – Recklessness • M – Mood changes

Emergency Actions

- If danger is immediate, call emergency services (911 in U.S.).
- Stay with the person until help arrives.
- Remove or secure lethal means if safe to do so.
- Call or text 988 (U.S.) or use local crisis numbers internationally.